



NEWSLETTER

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Autism Needs Survey Available Online 2
- Bringing Research Into Practice: The River Street Autism Program 4
- BOOK REVIEW : The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism by *Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.* 5
- The Pyramid Approach to Family Life *A Parent's Perspective* 6
- LEGISLATIVE ACTION UPDATE: Initiatives to Provide Services to Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders 8
- AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH Autism Society of Connecticut Plans Safety Awareness Campaign in April 9
- Emergency Preparation Tips from ASCONN..... 9
- RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES: University of Connecticut Researchers Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders 10
- LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: Conferences, Workshops, Lectures, Other Presentations of Interest 11
- Unified Theater Provides a Role for Every Student 18
- FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS Conference Registration Form 21
- About The Northwest Connecticut Partnership A Unique Collaboration Aims to Improve ASD Services* 22
- About CT FEAT Our Goals and Support Services* 23

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS:
FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF
EFFECTIVE EDUCATION
FOR CHILDREN WITH
AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

Saturday April 8, 2006

UConn Waterbury

Featuring

Andy Bondy, Ph.D.

Pyramid Education Consultants

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

The River Street Autism Program

And

Special Guest Keynote Speaker

Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus of the University of Massachusetts

Sponsored by CT FEAT and The River Street Autism Program, in Collaboration with LACASA and the UConn College of Continuing Studies

Members of The Northwest Connecticut Partnership for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities

(See Page 3)

STATE LEGISLATORS STUDY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

REPORTS PINPOINT CRITICAL NEED
FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING,
OTHER SERVICES FOR
PEOPLE WITH ASD

The Connecticut Office of Legislative Reports (OLR) recently released a series of reports addressing public services for children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

(See Page 7)

PLEASE SUPPORT CT FEAT



Your contributions help to pay for costs associated with the CT FEAT newsletter, Web site, telephone hotline, parent meetings, presentations, and other activities designed to provide information and support.

You can be sure that your contribution will go *directly to provide resources* that will enable families and other interested persons to learn about effective autism treatment, and to help children with autism achieve their full potential.

Please support our work by sending a check to CT FEAT (address below), or by participating in any of the following:

SBC COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

If you are a SBC customer, SBC will pay CT FEAT 5% of every dollar you spend on long distance calling. You can sign up today by calling 800-635-7638.

The UNITED WAY

Even though CT FEAT is not listed on the pledge card, it is eligible to receive your donation. United Way organizations will forward your gift to us if you write the CT FEAT address (below) and telephone number (860-571-3888) on the pledge card, or write the information in on your electronic pledge (click on "Write-In" on the designation page).

Tax deductible donations should be sent to:

**CT FEAT, Inc.
P.O. Box 370352,
West Hartford, CT 06137**

The contents of this newsletter are, unless otherwise noted, the property of Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment, Inc. (CT FEAT) and are copyright protected. Contents may be used only with proper attribution. The CT FEAT NEWSLETTER is edited by Roberta Daversa .

Copyright © 2006 CT FEAT, Inc. ■

ATTENTION CONNECTICUT PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Take Our On-line Survey!



Professional Development And Family Needs Assessment

We want YOUR opinions!

***It only takes a few minutes of your
time to help .***

The Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA), Education Connection, CT FEAT, and other members of the Northwest Connecticut Partnership for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities are interested in identifying topics for professional development activities and workshops.

Survey results will be used to assist the Partnership to improve services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and related developmental disabilities and their families.

Please take a moment to help us.

For a link to the brief, online survey,
visit the CT FEAT web site at

www.ctfeat.org
(See "Survey")

Or send an E-mail to CTAutismSurvey@aol.com

Thank you in advance for participating.
We look forward to hearing from you!✧

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS:
FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION
FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

April 8 Conference Features

Andy Bondy, Kathleen Dyer, and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff

CT FEAT and the River Street Autism Program, in collaboration with Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA) and the UConn College of Continuing Studies, are pleased to sponsor a very special learning opportunity on April 8, 2006, at the University of Connecticut in Waterbury.

Applied Behavior Analysis: Foundations and Innovations of Effective Education for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

will feature noted autism experts Andy Bondy, Ph.D., Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA, and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D., BCBA.

Dr. Beth Sulzer-Azaroff has been engaged in scholarship, research, consulting and teaching in the field of applied behavior analysis since its beginning, and has authored and co-authored numerous books and articles. Her books include *Behavior Analysis for Lasting Change* (with Roy Mayer, 1991), *Achieving Educational Excellence Using Behavioral Strategies* (1985), *Applying Behavior Analysis with Children and Youth* (1971), and *Applying Behavior Analysis: A Program for Developing Competence* (1981).

In her Keynote address, *Foundations and Current Directions of ABA in Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Dr. Sulzer-Azaroff will share her perspective on how ABA has evolved from its official beginning in 1968 to "one of the most widespread, socially important and dependable modes of intervening to enhance human performance."

Connecticut's own Dr. Kathleen Dyer, Clinical Director of the River Street Autism Program at Coltsville and noted autism researcher, will present *Innovations in*

ABA: The BASIC Curriculum, a model of social communication intervention developed by Dr. Dyer and other nationally recognized experts in autism. The Coltsville School is an essential partner in early intervention in Connecticut, with a reputation for bringing the latest research and evidence-based practices into educational programs for children who are serviced both in the Coltsville School and throughout the state with the RSAP Outreach Program. Dr. Dyer will discuss how to use child-directed procedures to reduce core deficits, including social avoidance behavior, repetitive behavior and communication deficits, and how these procedures are integrated with other evidenced-based practices to effect increases in positive affect, social approach and spontaneous communication with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Dr. Andy Bondy, former Director of the State-wide Delaware Autistic Program and co-founder of Pyramid Education Consultants, designs educational plans for children with autism and related disabilities that emphasize social communication opportunities across all environments. He is the co-creator of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), an innovative picture communication training system that combines theory and strategies from applied behavior analysis and the principles of verbal behavior, with a pragmatic, visual approach to social communication. PECS has become very popular in educational settings and with families of children with autism. Yet there remain

(Continued on page 4)



A dessert reception, honoring Drs. Bondy, Dyer, and Sulzer-Azaroff for their exceptional contributions to the education of children with autism and related disabilities, will follow the presentations.

misconceptions about PECS. Dr. Bondy will present **PECS: Facts and Fiction** to discuss PECS and some common questions about it: If you use PECS, does that mean you are giving up on speech? If you use PECS, are you giving up on ABA?, and Is PECS compatible with a Verbal Behavior Approach?

Conference participants will be invited to add additional questions that will be discussed at a panel presentation at the end of the conference. A dessert reception honoring Drs. Bondy, Dyer, and Sulzer-Azaroff for their exceptional contributions to the education of children with autism and related disabilities will follow.

Volunteers from CTFEAT and LACASA will sponsor a Pyramid Books and Educational Products Sale to benefit the Coltsville Research and Training Fund of the River Street Autism Program. *The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism*, by Andy Bondy and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, and other teaching resources will be available for purchase at the conference, and by pre-ordering with conference registration.

Conference brochures are available online at www.ctfeat.org ("Conferences"), or by calling the CT FEAT Information Hotline at (860) 571-3888. For your convenience, a registration form is included on page 23 of this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter. ✨

BRINGING RESEARCH

INTO PRACTICE:

THE RIVER STREET AUTISM PROGRAM

(Roberta Daversa)

Connecticut is certainly fortunate to have the River Street Autism Program. It is one of our beacons of effective intervention practices for the families and professionals who strive to educate children with autism spectrum disorders.

The RSAP offers high-quality educational programs for children through the River Street Autism Program at Coltsville, the River Street School, and through the RSAP Outreach Program, which services schools and home programs throughout Connecticut.

RSAP also offers educational opportunities to families and educators through workshops and collaboration with private and public-funded training programs.

These programs receive competent oversight by the Director, Tom Parvenski, who responded to the growing demand for services for young children with autism a decade ago by initiating this program. To support his vision of providing the highest quality services to children with autism, Mr. Parvenski recruited a highly qualified staff to support him in program development and service delivery.

Among these staff members is Dr. Kathleen Dyer, a nationally recognized expert in autism, and the Clinical Director of the RSAP at Coltsville. She is dedicated to incorporating evidence-based practices into educational programs for children with autism – without the "10 year lag" that seems to permeate the general picture of education for children with autism.

Dr. Dyer, who has a history of collaborating with other experts in autism research and treatment, and Dr. Andy Bondy, Dr. Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, and Ms. Joanne Matteo of Pyramid Education Consultants, recently launched a project to develop a systematic model of efficient staff training in the use of visual supports for the enhancement of communication and independence among students.

The project includes training for therapists, teachers and parents in the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and other visual supports.

PECS was developed by Dr. Bondy with Lori Frost, a certified speech pathologist, as a visual method to teach social communication. PECS has helped children, families and educators around the world overcome speech-production obstacles to functional communication, and has

been reported to increase speech production in children who use the system.*

The staff training model also includes intensive training on: assessment of and use of powerful



Beth Sulzer-Azeroff, Andy Bondy and Kathleen Dyer conduct training session with RSAP teachers and therapists.

reinforcers; development of functional objectives; development of functional social and communication skills; preventing and reducing contextually inappropriate behavior; generalization; designing effective lessons; minimizing and correcting errors; and other specific teaching strategies.

This training protocol has been implemented with RSAP center-based staff and Board Certified Behavior Analysts in the RSAP Outreach Program, who are responsible for providing services to over 60 children with ASD in more than 20 school districts throughout Connecticut.

Dr. Dyer, Dr. Sulzer-Azaroff, and Dr. Bondy are also collaborating on a research project to improve the rate at which children apply meaning to visual symbols. They have found that learning is enhanced when children are provided with learning opportunities that are child-initiated and lead to natural reinforcement.

Extensions of this research are being conducted in collaboration with Dr. Christina Foreman, a professor of communication disorders at the University of Massachusetts. In addition to her research on symbol learning, Dr. Foreman is studying procedures to enhance speech output for children with autism who also have characteristics of childhood apraxia of speech.

* Interested readers can find a review of PECS, and a review of the PECS Training Video, at the CT FEAT Web site, www.ctfeat.org (search "PECS"). A study addressing the efficacy of PECS, published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, Fall 2002, may be viewed online at the JABA Web site, www.seab.envmed.rochester.edu/jaba (search "PECS"), or via the Pyramid Education Consultants Web site, www.pecs.com.

BOOK REVIEW



THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN AUTISM

by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and
Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

(Reviewed by Lisa Schuler- Vance, MA)

It has been an absolute pleasure to review a book that has become one of my all time favorites. *The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism* is a wonderful manual, written for educators and families, and one that I always recommend to my professional friends, both special AND regular educators.

With decades of expertise in applied research and effective intervention to share, Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D. walk the talk, and show interested readers how to do the same.

The authors state in the first chapter that their intention is not to teach us how to teach specific skills, but how to successfully apply established learning principles to all learning environments, and to many different areas of human life. They include academic concept and skill building, effective communication and social interaction, remaining safe and healthy, and becoming physically adept and emotionally controlled.

Even though the main focus here is on students with autism and related disabilities, this book aims to help readers learn to design more effective learning environments within regular or special education, and home and community settings for all learners.

Whew! That is a lot to live up to in one book, but *The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism* more than meets the task. Each of the first 11 chapters focuses on one particular topic, and the final chapter demonstrates the use of all the pieces together by looking at how they can be incorporated into a daily classroom routine.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

BOOK REVIEW *THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN AUTISM* by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

This detailed look at the Pyramid Approach within a real classroom, along with the use of vignettes at the start of each chapter, makes the book very handy. These real-life examples allow the reader to see the concepts in practice, and help the reader to consider how to apply them to their own educational environments. Additional resources are listed at the end of each chapter, for those wishing to further explore each topic.

Chapter 2 reviews general rules of behavior. Readers are encouraged to consider behavior within context - to observe and identify the conditions influencing a behavior, and to explore how we can change those conditions in order to effect positive behavior change. It includes an excellent review of classical conditioning, operant conditioning and of course the ABC's (antecedent, behavior and consequence) of changing behavior. Clear explanations of reinforcement, punishment, including response cost, time-out and extinction procedures are included.

Then this book does what it does best, and takes these concepts a step further by addressing "different learning histories," and how these can influence and direct an individualized intervention program. Learning histories can affect how long it takes to implement strategies and what other steps you may have to take.

The section on what to teach and designing functional objectives makes a good point of encouraging the reader to be very familiar of what is expected of the child in comparison with his typical age peers. They are not saying that this is what you are to teach, but that it guides intervention steps toward a given destination. The authors provide excellent advice on how to build these steps based on a child's strengths, in order to minimize the sense of failure and to foster a sense of com-

(Continued on page 19)



THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO FAMILY LIFE A PARENT PERSPECTIVE

(Karen Neag)

Our family is typical when it comes to our concerns for the well being of all family members. When my daughter was diagnosed with autism at age 3, my husband and I spent several months searching for direction from the medical community, and participating in home intervention with our State Birth-to-Three System. We learned that we needed to pursue effective methods to help us manage autism in our family, instead of having autism manage us.

Facing the diagnosis, while very difficult, started me on a path that soon brought me to participate in a pilot autism-intervention-training program through the Shriver Center in Massachusetts. I volunteered to be a participant student to assist with course development, with the hopes that I would learn to help my child. The program started off with studies of several books on special needs education, all great books. But *The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism* by Andy Bondy, PhD. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, PhD., was the book that was pivotal to my learning. Soon after reading it, I began to use this information in our day-to-day family life. Later I found it a valuable resource in helping to design goals for individualized education plans (IEP).

I found the book very enlightening and parent friendly. It cleared up some of the misconceptions I had about behaviors associated with autism, and gave me clear advice on how to provide supports for and interact with my daughter. For example, before reading *The Pyramid Approach to Education*, I thought that the word "behavior" was used to imply actions that are unacceptable or inappropriate. I learned that focusing on positive behaviors, like learning and skill acquisition, is very important when considering the needs of chil-

dren with autism.

The book describes behavior and the **ABC's** of behavior - **A**ntecedent, **B**ehavior, and **C**onsequence - in an understandable way. This allowed me to see my daughter's behaviors, positive and negative, in a different light. I could understand that many "behaviors" were attempts to communicate, which could be shaped into productive communication skills.

For example, if she wanted to watch television, my daughter would go to the television and scream. As a nonverbal child, that was her way of bringing attention to her needs. The **A**ntecedent is the television, the **B**ehavior is screaming, and the **C**onsequence is to get the television. I realized that this screaming behavior should, and could, be replaced with a more appropriate way to request the television. The Pyramid approach uses the **P**icture **E**xchange **C**ommunication **S**ystem (**PECS**) to exchange pictures to communicate with other people.

The process of shaping this positive behavior, an appropriate way to request things she desired, really empowered my child by giving her a "voice." Using pictures as visual supports to inform my daughter about what is "All done," and what is "Next" in her day has helped her to become a much happier child.

Equally important to my daughter's happiness is her ability to be independent. Her IEP domains, such as self-help and leisure skills, are targeted for future independence. At age 9, through PECS and other elements of the Pyramid Approach, and the dedication and willingness of her teachers, my daughter is developing skills that can be built upon and prepare her for greater independence in the future.

Our family has benefited significantly through incorporating PECS and the Pyramid Approach in our life. I highly recommended *The Pyramid Approach in Education in Autism* for parents and educators.✽



STATE LEGISLATORS STUDY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

(Roberta Daversa)

Reports pinpoint critical need for professional training, other services, for children and adults with autism spectrum disorders.

The Connecticut General Assembly Office of Legislative Reports (OLR) released a series of papers addressing public services for children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

In one, *Professional Development for People Working with Children with Autism*, Chief Analyst Saul Spigel reports that there are too few professionals and paraprofessionals properly trained to teach children with autism in Connecticut. Also lacking are appropriate training opportunities and requirements for those who do.

Shortages, both in numbers of professionals and the specialized skill development required to work effectively with children with autism, include special education teachers, paraprofessionals, speech and language pathologists, behavior analysts, occupational therapists, and "the faculty to prepare these specialists."

According to the report, the causes for these shortages include an increased number of children diagnosed with ASD, the lack of autism specific training requirements, the lack of opportunities for professional training in new methods of educating children with ASD, and staff turnover. It suggests that the current training deficits contribute to professional burnout and staff turnover of people working with children with ASD.

The report notes that most people working within autism education and intervention, and those entering the field, "are trained as gener-

(Continued from page 7)

alists and lack specialized training in ASD. This is particularly true of teachers and others who work in school settings . . . speech and language pathologists and school psychologists need not take any courses specifically in ASD to work in Connecticut public schools. Teacher training programs in Connecticut's public colleges appear to offer few, if any, courses that specifically deal with children with ASD."

In Connecticut, special education teachers are certified by the age of the children they teach, not by specialized training to work with specific populations.

The OLR report goes on to mention that Southern Connecticut State University is planning a master's level special education program with a concentration in autism.

Pennsylvania is one of four states listed in this report as having exemplary professional training programs. Cathy Scutta, an educational consultant with Pennsylvania's Training and Technical Assistance Network, says professional preparation for ASD "therapy and instruction requires focused, in-depth training on various evidence-based strategies, followed by practical application with a learner and coaching or guided practice from an experienced educator or clinician."

The report suggests that specialized ASD training could be provided through graduate programs, continuing education requirements, or by creating an autism certificate for special educators that would require ASD specific training in evidence-based methods and strategies.

This report, and others addressing the needs of children and adults with ASD, can be viewed online at the Connecticut General Assembly Web site, www.cga.ct.gov/olr (search: "Autism"), or by contacting the Legislative Library at 860-240-8888.

The 2006 Reports are:

1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM (2006-R-0073.HTM);

2. SERVICES FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN CONNECTICUT AND SELECTED STATES (2006-R-0035.HTM);

3. LEAD STATE AGENCIES FOR SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (2006-R-0157.HTM).✧

Important Legislative Update

Initiatives to Provide Services to Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Two critically important bills that will move Connecticut forward in providing services to adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, H.B. No. 5471 and H.B. No. 5638, have made their way to the Appropriations Committee.

Please contact your state legislators and ask them to support these important bills. Information about your legislators is available online at www.congress.org. To locate the information electronically, you need only type in your zip code and a list of the names and contact information for your elected officials will be provided.

The Bills:

No. 5471: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS. *Requires the Commissioner of Mental Retardation to create a pilot program to provide services to adults with ASD who do not qualify for services under the Department of Mental Retardation.*

No. 5638: AN ACT CONCERNING A HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED WAIVER FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM OR OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. *To obtain a waiver from federal law for home and community services for children and adults with ASD absent mental retardation.*

For more information on these bills, please contact Lois Rosenwald at the Connecticut Autism Resource Center (CT-ASRC), at (203) 248-5222. ✧



**ASCONN
AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH
Activities**

Volunteers Sought for
Saturday "Mail Days" in April

April is Autism Awareness Month and the Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN) is focusing on every-day safety awareness with its "Hometown Heroes" theme. ASCONN aims to raise awareness about safety and emergency issues, concerning people with autism spectrum disorders, among families and public safety and emergency service providers.

ASCONN and the Yale Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs have collaborated in the distribution of Emergency Preparedness Packets, designed to provide first responders information about how to interact with persons on the autism spectrum during an emergency. The packets help parents prepare specific information about their child or family members' special needs that a first responder might need ("hides under bed," "nonverbal," "has communication book").

Other projects include demonstrations of the Ion-Kids Tracking System, which can give parents and caregivers warning that a child or family member has left the safe boundaries, and the 2006 ASCONN Mini-Grant program to help parents and family members purchase safety and security equipment, supplies and services.

ASCONN has partnered with Westfield Malls to set up staffed Autism Awareness tables on the following dates and locations:

- April 1 at the Trumbull Mall;
- April 8 at the Connecticut Post Mall in Milford;
- April 15 at the Enfield Mall;
- April 22 at the Meriden Mall.

For more information, please visit www.autismsocietyofct.org, or call ASCONN at (888) 453-4975.*

**WHAT CAN YOU DO TO
HELP SPREAD AWARENESS AND
PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES?**



Emergency Preparation Tips from ASCONN

- ✓ Call your local police department, fire department and 911 dispatcher and tell them about your family member with autism. Consider a visit to the department and bring your child along. Most first responders have systems where they can flag your house on their computer so that if they receive an emergency call from that address they can be prepared to handle a person on the spectrum appropriately.
- ✓ Prepare an emergency packet for your family member. Add information that a first responder would need, for example "non-verbal," "do not touch head," "screams at loud noises," "does not respond to name," and any other pertinent information that will help a responder in an emergency. Remember, in an emergency, you may not be there or not be able to help. Keep this information in an easily accessible place so that in an emergency it is available.
- ✓ Designate a family member, close friend or relative who does not live with you as the "contact person" in the event of an emergency that dislocates your family. This person will serve as the "hub" so that all family members only need to make one phone call to this person who will collect information about everyone's whereabouts in one central location.
- ✓ Volunteer for ASCONN Mail Days. If you can contribute a couple of hours on one Saturday in April, please call ASCONN at (888) 453-4975.*

University of Connecticut Researchers Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders Participants Sought for Several Studies

Study of Children With Excellent Outcome

Dr. Deborah Fein, a noted autism researcher and Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Connecticut, is currently following a number of children who have lost their Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis and have reached an excellent outcome. Dr. Fein is aiming to further study these children and others like them, and take a closer look at the factors that influenced their progress.

Dr. Fein is seeking information from families of such children, and is interested in perhaps having them participate in the study. Children who participate will be told that the study is about children who talked early vs. those who talked late, so they needn't hear any details of their own history that they don't already know.

"People are really starting to accept that there are a number of children, accurately diagnosed as being on the spectrum, who can have this excellent outcome," said Dr. Fein about the study. "We have gotten a tremendous amount of interest in this work from other professionals over the past few months."

For further information, please contact Dr. Fein at deborah.fein@uconn.edu.

Study of Language Development in Young Children in ABA Programs

Participants are being sought for a study of language acquisition in young children with autism who are receiving applied behavior analysis treatment. The study will examine whether or not children with autism learn language in the same manner as typically developing children, and if they progress through the same stages in language acquisition. Testing will be conducted in children's homes, at times convenient for the families, in 6-8 sessions over 2 years. Parents and therapists will have the benefit of the test results, which will give an objective measure of the child's progress in receptive and expressive language, and may help pinpoint areas that need more intensive remediation.

Children should be between twenty-four and forty-two months, and at or near the beginning of their ABA programs (less than 6 months into their ABA program), as they enter the study. Please contact Rose Jaffery, Research Assistant, at (860) 486-2675 (Gul.Jaffery@uconn.edu), or Dr. Letitia Naigles (letitia.naigles@uconn.edu), for further information.

Early Detection Project Continues

Research teams from the University of Connecticut have so far screened over 6000 children and are validating the MCHAT (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers), an early detection screening tool developed at UConn by Dr. Deborah Fein and colleagues. Dr. Fein would be glad to provide details about the findings to anyone who contacts her. You can e-mail her at deborah.fein@uconn.edu, or call (860) 486-3518.

Other Research Opportunities at UConn

Dr. Inge-Marie Eigsti, a new faculty member of the UConn Department of Psychology, is conducting several studies of learning skills in children on the spectrum. One study for verbal and nonverbal children ages 3-12, focuses on language development and how it is related to learning strategies in autism. Another study, aimed at children between ages 4 and 10, looks at children's use of gestures; early results suggest (as you may suspect!) that children on the spectrum gesture less than do their peers. A final study, which includes both a session in the lab as well as an optional brain imaging (MRI) session, looks at the way children on the spectrum focus their attention; This study is suitable for verbal children between ages 4 and 18.

For these studies, participants will receive a clinical report with standardized language and cognitive scores. Please contact Inge-Marie Eigsti at (860) 486-6021 or via e-mail at inge-marie.eigsti@uconn.edu.

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

This conference listing focuses on opportunities for training in effective autism treatment practices, primarily in and around Connecticut. The information also appears at the CT FEAT web site (www.ctfeat.org). It is periodically updated and circulated on the "parents only" CT FEAT listserv. Details about joining the listserv are available at the CT FEAT web site or by calling the CT FEAT Information Hotline at 860-571-3888. Other Presentations of Interest and Fundraising Events are listed separately.

Please verify registration deadlines with event sponsors.

(Event Announcements May be Submitted to EditorCTFEAT@aol.com.)

March 20 &- March 21, 2006

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Cromwell, CT

PICTURE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (PECS)

TWO-DAY PECS TRAINING WORKSHOP

Presenters: Catherine Horton, M.S., CCC/SLP, and Jo-Anne Matteo, M.S., CCC/SLP

This intense two-day training is designed to teach participants to appropriately implement the Picture Exchange Communication System. It begins with an overview of the Pyramid Approach to Education to explore the key components of designing effective educational environments. A historical overview of language training programs used with non-verbal individuals is discussed along with how to set the stage for an abundance of communication opportunities. Participants will learn how to implement the six Phases of PECS, including attributes, through presenter demonstrations, video examples and role-play opportunities. Participants will leave the workshop with a fundamental understanding of how to implement PECS with individuals with autism, related developmental disabilities, and/or limited communication skills. Register online at the PECS Web site, www.pecs.com, or contact Judy Barrett [www.pecs.com pyramid@pecs.com](http://www.pecs.com/pyramid@pecs.com) 888-732-7462

March 24, 2006

Rochester, NY

TEAMING UP FOR EFFECTIVE AUTISM INTERVENTION

A One-Day Conference Presented by the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis (NYSABA)

SPEAKERS INCLUDE: William Ahearn, The New England Center for Children; Sandra L. Harris, Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center; James W. Partington, Behavior Analysts, Inc; Tristram Smith, The University of Rochester Medical Center

Sponsored by the URMCC Strong Center for Developmental Disabilities and Summit Educational Resources. For more information, visit the NYSABA Web site, www.nysaba.org.

March 25, 2006

9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Hamden, CT

FACILITATING SOCIAL SKILLS FOR ASD CHILDREN, TEENS, AND ADULTS

Presenter: James Loomis, Ph.D.

Sponsored by: CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT-ASRC)

Dr. Loomis is a licensed psychologist in the State of Connecticut. His professional interests include the development of social skills, adaptation to pediatric illness, and school based programs for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders. This workshop is an excellent opportunity for school and community psychologists, social workers, and speech and language professionals either running groups or wanting to run groups for the ASD population. \$40. CEU's offered. Registration is required. Contact CT-ASRC at 203-248-5222.

March 30 & 31, 2006

9:00 am – 4:15 pm

New York, NY

WORKING TOGETHER: THE 4TH ANNUAL COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

Sponsored by Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism, The EDEN II Program, Connecticut Center for Child Development, and Alpine Learning Group.

Presenters include Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D., Gina Green, Ph.D., BCBA, Bridget Taylor, Psy.D., BCBA, many others. For conference details and registration, please contact The Connecticut Center for Child Development at (203) 882-8810.

March 31, 2006

10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Wilton Library

Wilton, CT

USING VISUAL SUPPORTS: AT HOME, IN SCHOOL, ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Presenter: Lynne Guilmette, M.Ed.

(Continued on page 12)

Sponsored by SPED-NET Wilton

Ms. Guilmette, a behavioral educational consultant and clinical supervisor of Behavioral Development and Educational Services, Trumbull, will present concrete strategies -- for home and school -- to facilitate daily routines for children with special needs who have strong visual learning skills. Visual supports help children learn more quickly, assist in learning to adjust to transitions and changes in routine, increase independence, and positively impact on one's ability to encode and organize information. Ms. Guilmette, who holds four Masters degrees in education and related fields, has worked with children with autism spectrum and behavioral disorders for nearly 30 years. RSVPs encouraged; please call Eve at 761-0680.

April 4, 2006

7:00 pm

New Canaan, CT:

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION (RDI) - THE STAGES AND HOW TO GET THERE

Presenter: Nancy Schwartz, Ph.D.

Dr. Schwartz is a speech and language pathologist with extensive experience working with children and teens on the autism spectrum, will discuss Relationship Development Intervention (RDI): The Stages and How to Get There.

Please RSVP Judi Anders at (203) 801-0794, jdianders@sbcglobal.net or Victoria Muñoz at (203) 972-1163, victoriamunoz@optonline.net

April 6, 2006

5:00 pm – 7 :00 pm

Middletown, CT

THE INTERACTIVE COLLABORATIVE AUTISM NETWORK (ICAN) ONLINE TRAINING SEMINARS: AN INTRODUCTION

Presents: David Cormier, Consultant, SERC, and Roger Frant, Ph.D., Consultant, CSDE

Sponsored by SERC

During this informal overview session, participants will be introduced to the Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (ICAN) online training modules on autism spectrum disorders. The ICAN site (www.autismnetwork.org) is for anyone who lives with, teaches, or otherwise supports children and youth with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), PreK-grade 12. It is designed to help parents, teachers, and individuals with ASD. The focus of ICAN is to provide information about characteristics; assessment; and academic, behavioral, communication, environmental, sensory, and social interventions.

Reservations required. Contact Carol Hotz at SERC, (860) 632-1485, ext. 232.

April 8, 2006

9:00 am - 2:30 pm

Check in 8:30 am

University of Connecticut, Waterbury Campus
Waterbury, CT

ABA: FOUNDATIONS & INNOVATIONS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM & RELATED DISABILITIES

Presenters: Andy Bondy, Ph.D., and Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., BCBA,

Keynote Speaker: Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

Sponsored by: CT FEAT and The River Street Autism Program, in collaboration with LACASA, and UCONN College of Continuing Studies, members of the Northwest Connecticut Partnership for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities
Beth Sulzer-Azaroff Ph.D., BCBA

Keynote: FOUNDATIONS & CURRENT DIRECTIONS OF ABA IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA

INNOVATIONS IN ABA: THE BASIC CURRICULUM

Andy Bondy, Ph.D.

PECS: FACTS AND FICTION

Registration \$65 by Mar 31 (after Mar 31 add \$10) includes lunch and dessert reception in honor of our speakers immediately following the conference .

CEUs available for teachers and behavior analysts

For more information visit www.ctfeat.org

“Conferences”, or call the CT FEAT Information Hotline at (860) 571-3888. *Also see page 3 of this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter.*

April 22, 2006

9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Hamden, CT

SENSORY IN THE CLASSROOM

Presenter: Christine Powers, O.T

Sponsored by CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center Fee, registration required. For more information, please call ASRC at 203-248-5222.

April 27 & April 28, 2006

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Meriden, CT

AN INTRODUCTION TO RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION (RDI)

Presenter: Steven Gutstein, Ph.D.

Sponsored by SERC

This two-day introductory session will provide participants with background information on the Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) Program. The goal of RDI is for each individual with an autism spectrum disorder to be excited about expanding his or her world, rather than afraid of it. Through this professional development opportunity, learn what motivates

individuals on the autism spectrum to develop relationships. Understand the contrasts between RDI and social skills programs that emphasize socially acceptable behaviors but fail to develop the functions, the desire or reasons, essential to the formation of relationships. Fee \$ 100. Contact: Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232 (*Editor's Note: Registration has closed for this event.*)

April 28, 2006

8:00 am – 3:00 pm

Providence, RI

AUTISM: SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Presenters: Breta Combs, MS, BCBA, Kristy Lund, MA, Robert Kidd, MS, BCBA, Stein Lund, and Sheila Wagner, M.Ed.

Sponsored by Rhode Island Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT/RI)

FEAT/RI's third annual conference for parents, educators and professionals.

Sheila Wagner, M.Ed., Keynote *INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD: WHAT IS OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE?*

Breta Combs, MS, BCBA *APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTING*

Robert Kidd, MS, BCBA, Stein K. Lund, and Kristy C. Lund, MA. *A CONSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH TO ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS*

Registration information, fees and other details are available online at www.featri.org, or by calling FEAT/RI at (401) 865-5015.

April 29, 2006

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Shelton, CT

BREAKING NEW GROUND IN

CONNECTICUT: CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS 2ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Presenters Include: Gerald Shook, Ph.D., BCBA, Erik Mayfield, Ph.D., BCBA, Stein Lund, Deirdre Fitzgerald, Ph.D., BCBA, Suzanne Letso, BCBA, others.

CEUs available for teachers, BCBAs and BCABAs. For more information, please contact marino@ccdinc.org, or call CCD at (203) 882-8810.

May 11, 2006

9am-3:30pm

Trumbull, CT

ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL SKILLS NEEDS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

Presented by: Susan Izeman, Ph.D.

This session will allow participants to explore the programming and teaching of social understanding in vari-

ous settings for students with ASD in kindergarten to grade 5. Participants will expand their knowledge base with respect to curriculum components, instructional strategies, and available supports and resources relating to the social skills development of elementary school students with autism spectrum disorders. Staff training, development of quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), assessment of social skills, and strategies and techniques for addressing social skills deficits.

Fee: \$30. Register by April 11, 2006

Registration form and more information about this and other training opportunities can be found at the Special Education Resource Center (SERC) web site

www.ctserc.org, or by contacting Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232

May 19, 2006

9:00 am-3:30 pm

Meriden, CT

ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL SKILLS NEEDS OF MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

Presented by Peter Gerdhardt, Ph.D.

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) struggle to make sense of an overwhelming and often confusing social world. This session will allow participants to explore the programming and teaching of social understanding in various settings for students with ASD in grades 6 to 12. Participants will expand their knowledge base with respect to curriculum components, instructional strategies, and available supports and resources relating to social skills development of middle and high school students with autism spectrum disorders. Additional issues will be explored, including staff training, development of quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), assessment of social skills, and strategies and techniques for addressing social skills deficits.

Fee: \$30. Register by April 18, 2006

Registration form and more information about this and other training opportunities can be found at the Special Education Resource Center (SERC) web site www.ctserc.org, or by contacting Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232. ✪

May 25, 2006

8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Danbury, CT

ASPERGER'S DISORDER & AUTISM: AN UPDATE ON UNDERSTANDING AND INTERVENTIONS

Presenter: Fred Volkmar, MD, Yale Developmental

(Continued on page 14)

Disabilities Clinic

A growing body of research and an increased awareness of the high numbers of children, adolescents, and adults with autism spectrum disorders make it critically important that clinicians, teachers, educational administrators, parents, caregivers, and advocates are well informed about these conditions. This seminar will provide participants with a detailed understanding of current knowledge on these conditions with an emphasis on implications of research for clinical intervention. Presentations include: *UNDERSTANDING AUTISM, ASPERGER'S DISORDER, AND RELATED CONDITIONS; ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TREATMENT; INTERVENTIONS; RECENT RESEARCH ON AUTISM AND RELATED CONDITIONS*. More information is available online at the Yale Developmental Disabilities Clinic Web site, www.info.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism

July 12 – 15, 2006

Providence, RI

THE AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA (ASA) 37TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: LIGHTING THE WAY TO HOPE, NAVIGATING TO SUCCESS AND SOLUTION

Four days of workshops too numerous to list here. Broad presentation topics include: Behavior Issues and Supports; Communication: Early Intervention: Education : Family and Sibling Support: Medicine and Research: Sensory Processing : Social Skills: Technology in Autism: and Transition Planning and Options for Adulthood. Detailed workshop information and schedule available online at www.autism-society.org ✧

32ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

MAY 26 – 30, 2006, ATLANTA, GA

Each year the Association for Behavior Analysis, Inc. (ABA) holds an annual international convention over the long Memorial Day weekend in a major US city. Numerous workshops on autism treatment by leading ABA experts. For a list of this year's presenters and topics, please visit the ABA convention Web site, www.abainternational.org. ✧

OTHER PRESENTATIONS OF INTEREST

March 18, 2006

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Litchfield, CT

THE 2ND ANNUAL AUTISM SPECTRUM RESOURCE AND RECREATION EXPO

Sponsored by EDUCATION CONNECTION

Families and people who work with them are invited to explore recreational and leisure resources for children with special needs. Representatives from various recreational programs, camps, music therapy, and more. Features include the "Creativity Corner", an interactive art center, and "The Spectrum Unplugged", a workshop with students from the FOCUS Alternative Learning Center. Admission is free. For more information, visit www.educationconnection.org, or call Vina McDermott, (860) 8524314.

March 29 & 30, 2006

8:30 am – 5:00 pm

New Haven, CT

STUDENTS WITH ASPERGER'S SYNDROME, AUTISM & RELATED CONDITIONS ATTENDING COLLEGE

Sponsored by the Yale University School of Medicine, the Yale Child Study Center, and the University of Connecticut School of Law.

This conference is for college support staff and professionals. The conference will focus on the recognition of these disorders and support strategies to facilitate academic success.

The conference brochure is available online at the Yale Developmental Disabilities Clinic Web site, www.info.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism, or call (203) 785-3538.

April 2, 2006

1:00 pm

Torrington, CT

RHYTHMS OF GRACE Worship Service for Children with Special Needs and Their Families

A different kind of child-centered, ecumenical church service, welcoming all! First Sunday of each month at the Trinity Episcopal Church, Trinity Chapel, 20 Prospect Street, Torrington (www.trinitytorrington.org). Entry to the Chapel is through the Water Street doors. For more information, please contact The Reverend Audrey Scanlan, Curate 860-482-6027

Apr 4, 2006

7:00 pm

West Hartford Town Hall

EVIDENCE OF HARM: Discussion and Book Signing with Author David Kirby

Sponsored by Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN) www.autismsocietyofct.org
Free admission. Limited seating; please call (860) 236-8374 for reservations.

April 8, 2006

9:00 am – 3:30 pm
Check-in: 8:30 am
Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, CT

LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL...HOW DO WE PREPARE?

Presenter: Jane Thirfeld Brown, Ed.D.
Keynote Speaker: Eustacia Cutler
Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center

Designed for families and professionals wanting to learn more about preparing children with High Functioning Autism and Asperger's for successful transitions to the adult world. This is a workshop for families with children ages 10 through early adulthood. Alternatives after high school will be discussed with an emphasis on post secondary education (college, vocational) and transition. Fees: ASRC Members, \$50.00; Non-members: \$65.00
For more information, please call ASRC at 203-248-5222.

April 8, 2006

1:00 – 2:30 pm
Western Connecticut State University
Danbury, CT

AUTISM IN INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Presenter: Dr. Kasia Chawarska
Sponsored by NAAR & Autism Speaks Working Together
This lecture "Autism in Infants and Children" will focus on some of the work Dr. Chawarska has been conducting as a collaborator for NAAR's High Risk Baby Sibling Autism Research Project. This collaboration is designed to enable clinicians make a more definitive diagnosis earlier than ever before by identifying behavioral and biological markers for autism. Free admission. Reservations required. For more information, please contact Valerie Zygmunt online at www.autismwalk.org westfair@naar.org, by calling (203) 552-8980.

April 10, 2006

6:30-8:30 pm
Westport Library,
Westport, CT

PRACTICAL TIPS ON HOW TO INTEGRATE STUDENT SUPPORT SER-

VICES INTO THE GENERAL EDUCATION SETTING

Presenter: Deborah Richards, Educational Consultant with the Bureau of Special Ed of the CT SDE
Sponsored by WE BELONG! Inclusion in Fairfield County
For more information and reservations, please contact Eva Greenwald at evagreenwald@sbcglobal.net.

April 21, 2006

10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Wilton Library
Wilton, CT

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Presenter: Kathleen Whitbread, Ph.D.,
Sponsored by SPED-NET Wilton
Dr. Whitbread will discuss how the concept of Universal Design -- which began as an architectural model to make public facilities accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities -- is now being applied to school environments. Instead of focusing on remediating students so that they can learn from a set curriculum, curricula should be made more flexible to accommodate learner differences. Universally designed materials are varied and diverse, going beyond the standard textbook to include digital, video, audio and online resources. Please RSVP to Eve at 761-0680.

April 25, 2006

10:00 am – Noon
New Canaan, CT

HOW CAN JASON TAKE ALGEBRA WHEN HE CAN'T ADD? MEANINGFUL MODIFICATIONS TO CONTENT COURSES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Presenter: Linda Rammler, M.Ed., Ph.D.
Sponsored by STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way and SPED*NET New Canaan
Some teachers and parents wonder how -- and question why, learners who have difficulty demonstrating mastery of basic skills could and should take courses on History, Chemistry, Literature, and Algebra. Since inclusion means raising the academic bar for all students, individualized approaches are needed to provide meaningful access to the general education curriculum across ALL content areas. This session will overview those approaches, using Algebra as an example, with specific application at the secondary level in mind. Please RSVP Beth Lurie at (203) 966-2982 or email her at lurie@optonline.net.

April 28, 2006

10:00 am – 4:30 pm
Hartford, CT

(Continued on page 16)

THE 4TH ANNUAL TOTAL ACCESS FOR EVERYONE NOW EXPO

SPONSORED BY THE NEW ENGLAND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY MARKETPLACE (NEAT)

Free admission to view the latest Assistive Technology products on the market and gather great resource information. Everything from computer software to mobility equipment will be on display, as will the professionals who can answer your questions directly. For more information, visit NEAT's Web site at www.neatmarketplace.org, or call: 860-286-3113 TTY, Toll Free in CT: 866-526-4492, or (860) 243-2869 in the Hartford area.

April 29, 2006

Hartford, CT

The Autism Society of Connecticut 16th Annual State Conference on Autism:

NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL ICEBERGS: IN SCHOOL, AT HOME, IN THE COMMUNITY

Presenter: Dr. Temple Grandin and Dr. Brenda Smith-Myles

Temple Grandin *ANIMALS IN TRANSLATION* and *UNWRITTEN RULES OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS*

Dr. Temple Grandin is accomplished in many areas thought impossible for persons with autism, and an inspiration to anyone whose life has been touched by an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Dr. Grandin will discuss the provocative ideas she presents in her book, *Animals in Translation*: that language is not a requirement for consciousness; the application of the autism theory of "hyper specificity"; other observations about the intersection of autism and animal behavior.

Dr. Brenda Smith-Myles *THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM*, Dr. Smith-Myles will present a fascinating look at the importance of teaching vague and elusive social information – the assumed knowledge that we tend not to directly teach, but which has tremendous implications for school, home and community environments.

Fee \$ 55 for ASCONN members, \$ 75 for all others.

Limited Capacity - Registration Deadline: April 21.

For more information, directions and registration, visit www.autismsocietyofct.org, or call ASCONN at (888) 453-4975

May 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, 2006

New York, NY

27TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENTAL AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

Post conference workshops (2 full-day):

AUTISM AND RELATED ISSUES, presented by Dr.

Ami Klin, of the Yale Child Study Center

FOSTERING MOTIVATION AND RESILIENCE,

Presented by Dr. Robert Brooks, Harvard Medical

School. More information is available online at the Yale Developmental Disabilities Clinic Web site, www.info.med.yale.edu/chldstdy/autism, or call Dalia Sztulwark at (212) 273-6193.

May 3, 2006

7:30 – 9:00 pm

Trumbull Library

Trumbull, CT

LOOKING AT AND THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE: SOME CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT EYE-TRACKING AND OTHER STUDIES OF SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Presenter: Dr. Ami Klin, Yale Child Study Center

Sponsored by AUTISM SPEAKS.

For more information or to register, please contact Valerie Zygmunt at vzygmunt@autismspeaks.org or call 203 - 552-8980.

May 5, 2006

10:00 am – 12:30 pm

Wilton Library

Wilton, CT

TESTING & EVALUATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THEM AND MAKING THEM USEFUL

Presenter: Donna Chauvin Quallen, M.Ed., C.A.S.,

Sponsored by SPED-NET Wilton

The testing, evaluation and interpretation process is foreign territory to most parents. Ms. Quallen will address testing within the total process of educational and psychological assessment: what the evaluation process should include, what to look for in a good evaluation, types of tests, testing formats and commonly used evaluation tools. Please RSVP to Eve at 761-0680.

May 7, 2006

1:00 pm

Torrington, CT

RHYTHMS OF GRACE Worship Service for Children with Special Needs and Their Families

A different kind of child-centered, ecumenical church service, welcoming all! First Sunday of each month at the Trinity Episcopal Church, Trinity Chapel, 20 Prospect Street, Torrington (www.trinitytorrington.org). Entry to the Chapel is through the Water Street doors. For more information, please contact The Reverend Audrey Scanlan, Curate 860-482-6027.✽

FUNDRAISERS

Saturday, March 25, 2006

7:00 – 11:00 pm

Orange, CT

Orange SEPTA Wine Tasting Fundraiser at the Holy Infant Church Gymnasium on Racebrook Road. Wine, martini tasting, appetizers and desserts! Raffles, auction, fun! All to benefit parent education on special needs, and family programs to provide social skill practice opportunities for the children and networking opportunities for the parents.

Contact Cristy Jones at (203) 882-0212 or crjones@optonline.net to reserve your table!

Tuesday, April 11, 2006

6:30pm-8pm

Westport, CT

“Walk for Autism Research” Northern Fairfield Kickoff Wine Reception at the Westport Country Playhouse.

Come learn more about The National Alliance for Autism Research and our annual Walk for Autism Research to be held on Sunday, June 4, 2006 at Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY. Suzanne Wright, Co-Founder of Autism Speaks, will say a few words regarding the importance of public awareness and raising funds for autism research. Stay after our event for a tour of the newly renovated playhouse! Team Building materials will be available.

Contact Valerie Zygmunt at (203) 552-8980

For more information about the June 4 walk, and how to join the effort by walking, contributing or volunteering, visit www.autismwalk.org/westfair.

Tuesday, April 25 2006

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

West Hartford, CT

The First Annual Greater Hartford “Walk for Autism Research” Kick-Off Luncheon at The Pond House Café.

Dr. Deborah Fein of the University of Connecticut will provide a research update on the NAAR-funded autism early screening study.

The Greater Hartford Walk is set for June 11, 2006 at Elizabeth Park in West Hartford, just when the roses should be in bloom! WDRC-FM (102.9) has joined us as a radio sponsor and will provide on-site broadcasting on Walk day.

Please visit our Walk Web site at www.autismwalk.org/hartford. With just six months to go until Walk day, we welcome any and all support and look forward to a very successful FIRST Greater Hartford Walk.



Walk for Autism Research

Sunday, June 4, 2006

Westchester/Fairfield

Walk for Autism Research
at Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY.

www.autismwalk.org/westfair

Sunday, June 11, 2006

Greater Hartford

Walk for Autism Research
at Elizabeth Park in West Hartford, CT.

www.autismwalk.org/hartford

The Walk for Autism Research

The Walk for Autism Research is the signature fundraising event for Autism Speaks. In the last six years, *Walk for Autism Research* events attracted hundreds of thousands of walkers worldwide and have raised tens of millions of dollars for autism research.

"Our walk is more than a fundraiser," said Trumbull resident, Marjorie Freeman, a member of the Northern Fairfield Walk Planning Committee. "It brings families together for a special day of activities and games. It gives families a chance to meet other families as well as community supporters who are committed to finding answers for all those who struggle with autism."



UNIFIED THEATER: A ROLE FOR EVERY STUDENT

(Micaela Connery)

We all have special talents, whether a sense of space and distance, an athletic ability, or a talent in music or theater. And we all share the difficult task of keeping our focus on our abilities, rather than on our individual limitations.

Unified Theater believes there are theatrical abilities in every individual and it is our job to discover and showcase them!

Founded in 2001, the mission of Unified Theater is to create theatrical productions equally featuring the talents of individuals with and without special needs. In order to achieve this mission, Unified Theater encourages participation of individuals with various developmental and physical abilities and spotlights their strengths.

As an organization, we guide and support schools and community organizations as they form Unified Theater groups and plan stage productions. Each program provides a non-competitive, structured yet flexible setting where all members have a voice in the final production, and are offered opportunities to express themselves in all aspects of theater.

Our philosophy is that every member, actor or crewmember, is an equal. Theater, in general, creates an environment very conducive to this philosophy. In a production, both cast and crew must work as a unit in which all members must contribute equally.

Currently, in Connecticut, there are Unified Theater groups at Conard and Hall High Schools (West Hartford), South Windsor

High School, Sedgwick Middle School (West Hartford), and Norfeldt Elementary School (West Hartford).

Unified Theater productions are entirely student directed, produced, and stage-managed. This is a key aspect of what makes Unified Theater unique and truly special. Students tend to naturally focus on abilities. They look at the group they direct as a unit and treat every member as an equal.

The student leaders I have observed have consistently impressed me with their understating of the Unified Theater mission, and their abilities to carry it out.

Also important to the formation of a Unified Theater group is the help of an advisor, usually a teacher in the school, who supports the student directors, producers, and stage-managers. At the elementary school level, the advisor works as a director who solicits continuous input on the production from all students involved.

I had thought that there was no better feeling than performing on the stage. That was until I saw other students, who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to actively experience theater, perform in their first production with Unified Theater.

These programs allow students of *all* abilities the opportunity to be showcased on stage. It has provided valuable experiences for student both with and without special needs and will continue to do so.

(Editor's Note: Ms. Connery is the Founder and Executive Director of Unified Theater. For more information on how to establish a Unified Theater group in your community, please visit the Unified Theater Web site at www.unifiedtheater.org or e-mail Ms. Connery at Micaela@unifiedtheater.org.)



(Continued from page 6)

BOOK REVIEW *THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN AUTISM* by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

petence in the learner.

Drs. Bondy and Sulzer-Azaroff also make the case for teaching pivotal developmental skills – those which teach basic skills that serve as a foundation for further learning, such as learning the alphabet so that they can then learn to read. The authors recommend that the development of individual goals and objectives should begin by focusing on the big picture, and then determining what needs to be taught in order to foster skill development toward high levels of learning.

Chapter 4, *Powerful Reinforcement Systems*, highlights incidental teaching and how those opportunities can contain their own reinforcers. Think of the person who has to make his own sandwich, but then gets to eat it. There is a clear review of the use of primary and secondary reinforcers, and strategies to boost reinforcer effectiveness, including the make-it-or-break-it use of schedules of reinforcement. It even offers guidance in choosing reinforcers for those children who seem to not be reinforced by anything. Applying the Premack principle, “access to high-frequency behaviors can serve as reinforcers for lower-frequency behaviors,” can help to plan reinforcers and their schedule of use.

Here and throughout the book, readers are reminded that a quality program is one designed by careful observation and planning.

The chapter on communication and social skills examines social communication, and focuses on the function of communication, choosing a communication method (i.e., Picture Exchange Communication System, sign language, etc.), and identifies critical communication skills. For example, an effective plan to reduce tantrum behavior is to teach the child to ask for help before a tantrum begins.

Giving non-verbal or low-verbal children the tools to communicate with those in his or her environment, through pictures, text prompts or

sign language, is crucial to the development of social communication for these children. These visual modes of communication provide effective alternatives to inappropriate behaviors (e.g. tantrums), and help to avoid repeated practice of undesired behaviors.

The book includes a wonderful section detailing the receptive skills that are required for following directions, transitioning, waiting, and following a schedule. They focus on the verbal and non-verbal elements of communication. The Critical Functional Communication Checklist provides a helpful guide for determining what we need to teach.

For those people familiar with positive behavioral support (PBS) plans, Chapter 6 is a fun review, For those who know just a bit about PBS, this section offers easy to understand information on developing alternative behaviors. The reader is helped to understand how to manipulate the antecedents to undesired behaviors, and differentially reinforce acceptable behaviors in order to decrease inappropriate behaviors.

Included are reader-friendly explanations of DRO (differential reinforcement of other behavior), DRA (differential reinforcement of alternative behavior), DRI (differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior) and DRL (differential reinforcement of low rates). The authors offer guidance on how to decide which reinforcement plan will most likely be effective for the behavior you want to change.

Once again, the reader is encouraged to rethink something we often take for granted – generalization of learned skills. When a specific skill is learned under one set of variables, teachers and parents sometimes expect a child to be able to automatically apply it to other situations that require the skill. Chapter 7 helps the reader design intervention programs that bridge initial learning environments to multiple settings. The use of stimulus generalization (completing the same response such as with different people, places, time and materials) and response generalization (completing the same response such as

(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

BOOK REVIEW THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN AUTISM by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

making a variety of types of sandwiches) are detailed. The authors make a strong case for planning for generalizing from when you first start to teach.

Chapter 8, Designing Effective Lessons, is probably the meatiest section and one that bears revisiting often. The authors pull together the pieces from the previous chapters, delving into well designed lesson plans which include times, places, materials, teaching steps, what to observe and how to record data. I like how they separate lessons into three types: teacher-initiated discrete trial formats; teacher-initiated sequential lessons; and student-initiated lessons. This provides teachers and parents with different methods to teach different skills.

An important discussion is the use of natural cues to avoid prompt-dependency in our learners. By teaching certain skills (i.e., self-help skills where each step is the cue for the next) through natural cues, we reduce the likelihood a child will become prompt dependent.

Other essential teaching techniques covered by Drs. Bondy and Sulzer-Azaroff include task analysis, identification of natural cues, least to most prompt hierarchy, prompt fading, delayed prompting, constant time delay and progressive time delay. Included is a concise explanation of forward and backward chaining for teaching sequential lessons.

Minimizing and correcting errors within learning programs are addressed through discussions of “errorless learning”, prompt fading and error correction strategies. The authors caution that trial and error learning can work in some situations, but that the repetition of errors by a learner can undermine skill acquisition. “Practice makes permanent.”

We would all agree that data is valuable and helps us figure out where to go next, but the

questions asked by educators are often about what to collect and how to analyze the data. This chapter explores the “whats, hows and whys” of data collection, making it easy for the reader to form a plan for effective use of data - an important tool to guide individualized instruction.

The final chapter of this book demonstrates how all of the information covered previously is applied in a model classroom of six preschool students and their staff.

I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in learning to become a more effective and efficient teacher, whether a professional or a family member. Readers will be provided a firm foundation in essential learning principles, and how to consistently apply those principles within various learning environments. It is a book that you can reference over and over to build upon an understanding of concepts covered, and their application in our work to help learners reach their full potential in their school, home and community experiences.

The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism, by Andy Bondy, Ph.D., and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D. (2002), is a 236 page soft-cover, ISBN 1-928598-03-X, published by Pyramid Educational Products, Inc. The book costs \$32 and is available through Pyramid Educational Products, www.pyramidproducts.com.

(Editor's Note: Lisa Schuler-Vance is a special education teacher at Long Meadow Elementary School, Middlebury, CT, where she teaches young children with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities. Lisa is also a member of the Board of Directors of LACASA, the Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association.) ✨

FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES

Saturday April 8, 2006

UConn Waterbury

(Directions to the UConn Waterbury Campus on Back)

Conference and Luncheon Registration Form

Volunteers from CT FEAT and LACASA will sponsor a Pyramid Book and Educational Products Sale on the day of the conference featuring THE PYRAMID APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN AUTISM by Drs. Andy Bondy and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff (2002), and THE PICTURE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (PECS) TRAINING MANUAL, 2ND EDITION by Lori Frost and Andy Bondy (2002), and other PECS products, to benefit the Coltsville Research and Training Fund of the River Street Autism Program.

Please join us in honoring Drs. Bondy, Dyer, and Sulzer-Azaroff for their exceptional contributions to the education of children with autism and related disabilities at a dessert reception immediately following the conference.

You can pre-order *these and other books and products with your conference registration form and pick them up at the conference!

- The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism by Drs. Andy Bondy and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff (2002)...\$ 32.00
The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Training Manual, 2nd Edition by Lori Frost and Andy Bondy (2002)...\$ 45.00

More information on these and other books and teaching products can be viewed at www.pyramidproducts.com.

*For pre-orders, please include product name and cost for each item ordered with your conference registration.

Please send completed registration form and your check for \$65 by March 31, 2006 (after March 31, add \$10 for late registration) to: CT FEAT, Inc. PO Box 370352, West Hartford, CT 06137

Online registration and credit card payments are available by contacting Roberta Daversa at EditorCTFEAT@aol.com.

For purchase order payments, please enclose authorized P.O. with your registration form.

Information is available at the CT FEAT Information Hotline (860) 571-3888 and on the Web at www.ctfeat.org.

Name: Telephone: E-mail:

Address: City: Zip:

School District or Organization: CEUs requested

I am a: Special Educator Para-professional Regular Classroom Teacher Behavior Analyst
Parent Administrator Related Service Personnel (Speech, OT, PT, etc.) Student Other

Yes, I would like to pre-order a copy of the following to benefit the Coltsville Research and Training Fund of the River Street Autism Program (see previous page):

\$32.00 The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

\$45.00 The Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) Training Manual, 2nd Edition, by Lori Frost, MS, CCC-SLP, and Andy Bondy, Ph.D

Check enclosed for conference fee \$ and Books and/or PECS products* \$ Total \$

*Online catalog available at pyramidproducts.com

Directions to New UConn Waterbury Campus (Downtown)

From I-84 Eastbound (Danbury-Waterbury): Take exit 22; at the bottom of the ramp turn left onto South Main Street. Proceed under the highway. Continue on South Main Street to 4th traffic light (Kingsbury Street) and take a right onto Kingsbury. Take a right at the next traffic light (North Elm Street) and the entrance to the UConn Parking Facility will be on your right.

From I-84 Westbound (Hartford-Waterbury): Take exit 22 Union Street; at the bottom of the ramp turn left onto Union Street. Go straight. At the 3rd light at St. Mary's Hospital turn right onto South Elm Street. Go through 3 lights past the blue awning for Family Health Services. The entrance to the UCONN Parking Facility will be on your left.

From Route 8 North (Bridgeport-Waterbury): Take exit 31 onto 84 East. Take first exit #22; at the bottom of the ramp turn left onto South Main Street. Proceed under the highway. Continue on South Main Street to 4th traffic light (Kingsbury Street) and take a right onto Kingsbury. Take a right at the next traffic light (North Elm Street) and the entrance to the UConn Parking Facility will be on your right.

From Route 8 South (Winsted-Waterbury): Take (lefthand) exit 32, Riverside Street. Take a left at light onto Freight Street. At end take a left onto Meadow Street and your first right at the light onto West Main Street. Follow West Main Street, crossing North Main (the street then becomes East Main Street) and continue past the University (on your left). Take left at first traffic light onto North Elm

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT PARTNERSHIP FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: A UNIQUE COLLABORATION

The Northwest Connecticut Partnership for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities is a collaboration of state and private agencies, and individuals dedicated to improving educational and support services for people with autism and related disabilities and their families.

The overarching goal of the Northwest Partnership is to develop a seamless program of personnel preparation, from high school through graduate school, for individuals interested in working with persons with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other related developmental disabilities and their families.

Northwest Connecticut Partnership members include: The Education Connection; the University of Connecticut Tri-Campus; the UConn College of Continuing Studies; the A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCE); Northwestern Connecticut Community Technical College (NCCTC); the Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation; the Connecticut State Department of Education; Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT); Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA); The River Street Autism Program; private service providers; local public schools; and family members.

For more information about the Partnership, e-mail CTautismsurvey@aol.com.

CT FEAT, Inc.

PO Box 370352
West Hartford, CT
06137-0352

860-571-3888

www.ctfeat.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rosanne Craemer Shea
President

Donna Cohen
Vice President

Robert Shea, Jr.
Secretary

Elizabeth Curry
Treasurer

Lynette Borkowski

Denise Buckenheimer

Beth Lambert

Tricia Winter

*RESOURCE
COORDINATOR*

Roberta Daversa

ABOUT CT FEAT

Formed in 1997 by parents and relatives, *Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT)* is a non-profit organization created to provide information and support to the families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

GOALS:

- To provide information and resources that enable families to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of current treatment approaches;
- To support families seeking or implementing behavioral intervention programs;
- To expand the availability of high quality professional services by supporting education and training opportunities in applied behavior analysis (ABA);
- To increase public awareness regarding the high incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders and the availability of effective, scientifically validated treatments.

RESOURCES:

- An **"Information Hotline"** by which **Connecticut** families can learn about CT FEAT's activities and request an information packet. Parents also can request to speak in confidence with another parent about issues related to ABA-based treatment. Call (860) 571-3888.
- **Parent Support Group meetings**, which take place in Rocky Hill, CT. The only requirement for participation in the meetings is that parents agree to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality. Please call the Parent Hotline (860-571-3888) or visit the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org, for information about future meetings.
- An **Unmoderated "Parents Only" Internet Mailing List** that provides **Connecticut parents** of ASD children with a forum to discuss issues of concern. **To subscribe to the list**, send an E-mail message to ctfeat@ctfeat.org, providing your name, e-mail address, and mailing address. Also please state why you want to join the list, **and** your explicit agreement to honor the confidentiality requirement.
- The **CT FEAT Newsletter** which contains news of interest (e.g. book reviews, conference announcements, etc.). To subscribe (free) , please contact send an e-mail to ctfeat@ctfeat.org or call the Information Hotline (860-571-3888) .
- The CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org, provides extensive information resources including book and video reviews, conference listings, an 'ABA Job Connections' employment section where prospective employees and employers can find each other, Spanish language resources, research articles, and back issues of the information-packed CT FEAT newsletter.
- **Advocacy and resources** to expand the availability of high quality professional services for children and families.

CT FEAT Bylaws provide that all members of the Board of Directors shall be parents or family members of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. There is Board representation from throughout the state.

Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT) is a non-profit organization staffed by **volunteers** and funded through the generosity of caring supporters.

If you are a **Connecticut parent or professional** and would like to be a volunteer for CT FEAT activities, you can call (860) 571-3888, write to P.O. Box 370352, West Hartford, CT 06137, or e-mail ctfeat@ctfeat.org. We'd like to hear from you! ☺



P.O. Box 370352 · West Hartford, CT 06137

www.ctfeat.org

FIRST CLASS
U S Postage
PAID
Waterbury, CT
Permit No. 442

**FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS OF
EFFECTIVE EDUCATION**

Saturday April 8, 2006
UConn Waterbury

Featuring
Andy Bondy, Ph.D.

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

And

Special Guest Keynote Speaker
Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Ph.D.

Helping Children Reach Their Full Potential