



NEWSLETTER

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Jer's Song..... 2

Feet for FEAT! *UConn Stamford Psychology Club Walks for CT FEAT*..... 3

Five Easy Ways to Support CT FEAT 3

FOUNDATIONS & INNOVATIONS II Conference *Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and Related Disabilities* 4

BOOK REVIEW *The Autism Sourcebook: Everything You Need to Know About Diagnosis, Treatment, Coping and Healing, by Karen Siff Exhorn* 6

ABA, VB, and RDI® What's a Parent to Do?..... 7

DVD REVIEW *Going to the Heart of Autism: The Relationship Development Intervention Program, by Dr. Steven Gutstein* 8

More About RDI® 9

Rachael's Special Day.....10

From One Parent to Another *Bowling for Behavior: How I Use Powerful Rewards to Improve Behavior*.....11

Respite Options for Families11

Connecticut Autism Pilot Program Seeks Participants and Providers.....12

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES: *UConn, Yale and CCMC Studies Have Openings for Participants*13

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS & LECTURES *Focused on Research Validated Practices*14

Other Presentations of Interest & Happenings.....17

CT FEAT, DISCOVERY TOYS® and AUTISM.....18

ASD Parent Support Meetings19

FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS II:
**Effective Strategies for the Education
of Children with
Autism and Related Disabilities**

Saturday May 19, 2007
8:30 AM—3 PM
University of Connecticut, Waterbury

Featuring

Andy Bondy, Ph.D.
Pyramid Educational Consultants

Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D.
The University of Connecticut

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
The River Street Autism Program

Deborah Fein, Ph.D.
The University of Connecticut

(See Pages 4—6 and 22)

CT FEAT Announces

The 2007

Nancy Leahy-Shea Memorial Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted for the CT FEAT 2007 Nancy Leahy-Shea Memorial Scholarship for Professional Development in Applied Behavior Analysis.

The scholarship will be awarded to a Connecticut educator interested in pursuing national certification as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Special education teachers and speech-language professionals currently working with children with autism may apply. Interested persons should contact the CT FEAT newsletter editor at editorCTFEAT@aol.com or call the CT FEAT Information Hotline at (860) 571-3888 for more information.

Jer's Song

Music and lyrics available at www.ctfeat.org , where you can also read the touching story of Jer's Song. (See "About Us".)

When I look into your eyes
I see God's face I see the ties
That bind us all

Your laughter fills me up each time
You lift me up you help me climb
Reach with me

When you hug me oh so tight
I feel the strength of God's
true might
Holding me.

All the things you love to do
I will be there next to you
Share with me

All the things you love to do
I will be there next to you
Share with me

When you dive and disappear
The waves make sounds I need to hear
Listening

Teach me all I need to know
That miracles are hard to know
Until you see

To the music of your mind
Spaces you explore and find
finding me

Every moment is a chance
To be a partner in the dance
Dance with me

All the things you love to do
I will be there next to you
Share with me

All the things you love to do
I will be there next to you
Share with me

Tell me what's inside your head
Tell me how you can be led
Into my -

Tell me what's inside your head
Tell me how you can be led
Into my -

Tell me what's inside your head
Tell me how I can be led
Into your world

Tell me what's inside your head
Tell me how I can be led
Into your world

Copyright © 2005

When you take me by the hand
To show me mysteries you plan
Leading me

Original Tune by Jeremiah Shea
Piano Music by Kasinda McKenzie
Lyrics by Rosie Shea
Vocals by Micaela Connery & Fiona Shea
Recording and mixing by Rob Hugh

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. To subscribe, please contact newsletter@ctfeat.org, or call the CT FEAT Information Hotline at (860) 571-3888. Newsletter archives can be found at www.ctfeat.org.

Copyright © 2007 CT FEAT, Inc. ■

Feet for FEAT

UConn Stamford Psychology Club Walks the Walk to Support CT FEAT!

The University of Connecticut Stamford Psychology Club students took some time off from their studies early last Fall for a great cause—to sponsor a fundraising walk to benefit *Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment*.

The walk took place at Cove Island Park in Stamford on a picture-perfect Saturday morning. UConn students were joined by faculty members and administrators, CT FEAT board members and their families and many other caring supporters, including State Senator Andrew McDonald, to raise funds for CT FEAT and to enjoy the fabulous shoreline views and pleasant walking trails of the park.

Thanks to **Walk for Autism** organizers Kasia Bogusiewicz and Jason Kersten and to everyone who supported CT FEAT with their feet and fingers (writing those checks!). We appreciate their votes of confidence and their help in providing resources to enable families and other interested persons to learn about effective autism treatment. ☐



Dr. Michael Ego (Associate Vice Provost), Dr. Jerry Schulster (Psychology Department), Kasia Bogusiewicz (Co-President, Psychology Club), Jason Kersten (Co-President, Psychology Club), and Dr. James Perrone (Psychology Department) of the University of Connecticut Stamford present CT FEAT board member Denise Buckenheimer with a sizeable check in support of CT FEAT's programs and services.

FIVE EASY WAYS TO SUPPORT CT FEAT

Your contributions allow CT FEAT to serve families with autism by providing FREE information and support through the **CT FEAT Web site, newsletters, telephone information Hotline, parent meetings, parent-only listserv and other activities**. Your gift allows CT FEAT to continue its important work as an effective and independent grassroots parent network.

CT FEAT also supports the **professional development** of the individuals who work with our children. Professionals who are interested in implementing effective, evidence-based autism intervention are among our most important and valued allies in helping children to reach their full potential.

In recognition of the importance of professional development, CT FEAT established the **Nancy Leahy Shea Memorial Scholarship Fund**, to provide scholarships to Connecticut teachers and paraprofessionals interested in academic training and certification in applied behavior analysis (ABA). Beginning in 2004, the award has fully funded coursework required for certification in ABA for 2 masters level special educators and for 1 degreed paraprofessional working in Connecticut's public schools. CT FEAT also actively supports other collaborative projects to provide learning opportunities for families and professionals.

Tax-deductible contributions from caring supporters are essential to the efforts of CT FEAT to provide information, resources and hope to Connecticut families and professionals.

You Can Help . . .

• SEND A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION OF ANY AMOUNT

You can donate securely online at the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org (see "About Us"), or send your charitable contribution to:

CT FEAT, Inc.
PO Box 370352
West Hartford, CT 06137



• CONTRIBUTE THROUGH THE UNITED WAY

CT FEAT can receive gifts through United Way Community Campaign employee giving programs as a "write-in" beneficiary. You can write in the CT FEAT address (above) and telephone number, (860) 571-3888 on your pledge form.

• BUY DISCOVERY TOYS® THROUGH OUR WEB SITE

DISCOVERY TOYS® has recently begun an affiliation with CT FEAT as a recommended resource. Visit the CT FEAT web site (see "About Us") for more information and a special list of recommended toys for autism intervention programs.

• MAKE AMAZON.COM PURCHASES THROUGH CT FEAT

Books, gifts certificates and numerous other Amazon vendor products purchased through the CT FEAT web site earn commissions for CT FEAT. Check out our Recommended Reading page.

• VOLUNTEER TO HELP

Call us at (860) 571-3888 for information on volunteering for special events.☐

**FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS II:
Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and Related Disabilities**

Saturday, May 19, 2007

8:30 AM—3 PM

University of Connecticut, Waterbury Campus

Continuing Education Credits Available for Educators and Behavior Analysts. See Page 22 for More Information.

8:45 AM

Keynote Address

**Are We There Yet? Building the Road from Scientifically Based Research
to Effective Educational Policies for Children with Autism**

Presented by Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D.

Federal law now requires special educators to provide learning programs that are based on peer-reviewed research and that focus on improving student academic achievement. Through this legislation, Congress sought to bring the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) into alignment with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its heavy emphasis on using instructional procedures, interventions, & curricula that have been demonstrated to be effective by "scientifically-based research." Dr. Bruder will discuss the components of research-based intervention and educational programs under current federal law, and the distance between current practices in professional training and the goals of competence mandated by IDEA. She will share her perspective on what needs to happen to get there from here.

9:30 AM

Research and the Recovery Phenomenon

Presented by Deborah Fein, Ph.D.

Recovery from autism used to be considered the stuff of dreams of unrealistic parents and off-beat professionals. Lately though, the scientific and professional communities are taking a closer look at the phenomenon of recovery among some children with autism. While it is still generally accepted that there is no cure for autism, recovery from the debilitating symptoms of the disorder seems to be a potential goal of autism intervention. Dr. Fein and her colleagues at the University of Connecticut have been at the forefront of this exciting and provocative area of scientific research. She will discuss her findings on children who have lost their autism diagnosis or had other excellent outcomes with intensive early intervention and the other factors that might contribute to recovery.

Morning Break

10:45 AM

**Assessment and Remediation of Speech Disorders
in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

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

Verbal communication is considered a core deficit in the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorders. This workshop is designed to teach participants to treat intelligibility problems in children with autism spectrum disorders. Guidelines on how to: 1) assess intelligibility problems; 2) use the normal developmental model when selecting appropriate targets; 3) sequence treatment objectives; 4) improve intelligibility using behavioral interventions; 5) program for generalization; 6) evaluate program success and 7) troubleshoot.

LUNCHEON BUFFET PROVIDED

12:45 PM

How to Help Children and Adults with Autism Talk About Their Emotions

Presented by Andrew Bondy, Ph.D.

Many people with autism have difficulty communicating about what is going on 'inside'- from simple descriptions of what hurts, to what makes them happy, to expressions of more complex emotions. This talk will review how typically developing children seem to acquire skills associated with expressing their feelings and emotions. We will look at one analysis offered by BF Skinner from his book *Verbal Behavior* as well as from other sources. We also will look at how many professionals have thus far dealt with creating lessons to teach these critical skills, and we will compare them to what Skinner's analysis would suggest. Because Skinner's position emphasizes that any modality can be used for Verbal Behavior, we will discuss using various strategies, including PECS, sign and the use of VOCAs. Finally, we will look at how we might modify existing lessons to improve our chances of helping children and adults with autism better communicate about their inner life.

2:30—3:00 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION OF QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and Related Disabilities

May 19 Conference Features

Dr. Andy Bondy, Dr. Mary Beth Bruder, Dr. Kathleen Dyer, and Dr. Deborah Fein

On Saturday May 19, 2007, Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT), in collaboration with the River Street Autism Program and the Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA), will host an exciting learning opportunity for educators and related service providers, administrators, students and family members interested in effective education for children with autism and related special needs. The conference will be held from 8:30 AM to 3:PM at the University of Connecticut Waterbury campus.

Foundations and Innovations II: Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and Related Disabilities aims to examine the roles of science-based research and the art of innovation in developing effective autism treatment programs. The conference will feature 4 presentations by noted experts in autism research, intervention and clinical practice Dr. Andy Bondy, Dr. Kathleen Dyer and Dr. Deborah Fein, with guest keynote speaker Dr. Mary Beth Bruder.

FOUNDATIONS

Are We There Yet? Building the Road from Scientifically Based Research to Effective Educational Policies, will be presented by Mary Beth Bruder Ph.D., director of the University of Connecticut A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service, and Professor of Pediatrics and Educational Psychology at the UCONN School of Medicine. She has been involved in the design, provision, and evaluation of early intervention services within a number of states and across a variety of agencies. Dr. Bruder will discuss the components of research-based intervention and educational programs under current federal law, which requires special educators to provide learning programs that are based on "peer-reviewed research," and that focus on improving student academic achievement. Dr. Bruder will also address the distance between current practices in professional training and the goals of competence mandated by IDEA. She will share her perspective on how to move from where we are to where we need to be in effective service delivery.



Mary Beth Bruder

Research and the Recovery Phenomenon, presented by Deborah Fein, Ph.D., clinical neuropsychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, will provide conference participants with a look at her findings on children with autism who have had excellent outcomes with intensive early intervention. Dr. Fein has been conducting research about autism for over 25 years. She has investigated numerous areas in autism, including peptide abnormalities, brainstem evoked potentials, language



Deborah Fein

and memory, estimating and other cognitive skills, sensory abnormalities, early detection and theoretical issues concerning diagnosis. She and her colleagues at UCONN developed the M-CHAT (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers), a comprehensive screening tool for early detection of autism. Dr. Fein's research has been supported by several NIH institutes, the March of Dimes, and the National Association for Autism Research (NAAR). She was recently awarded the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees Distinguished Professors Award, UCONN's highest recognition for a faculty member. Dr. Fein also has a small private practice in Springfield, MA, where she conducts neuropsychological assessment primarily on children with autism.

The third presentation will be a workshop on ***Assessment and Remediation of Speech Disorders in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*** with Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA. It is designed to teach participants to assess and treat intelligibility problems often found in children with autism. Dr. Dyer, the Clinical Director of the River Street Autism Program at Coltsville, in Hartford, Connecticut, is a certified speech and language pathologist, a certified behavior analyst, and a nationally recognized expert in autism. She has served children with autism for over 30 years in clinical and university-based research settings, and has collaborated with pioneers in the field of effective treatment, including Ivar Lovass, Robert Koegel, and Andy Bondy. Dr. Dyer has taught in various university settings, and is currently on the faculty at Elms College. Her work has been disseminated through national and international conferences, as well as in numerous research articles and books on applied behavior analysis (ABA). Dr. Dyer participated in developing the current *Guidelines for Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism* for the State of Connecticut.

INNOVATIONS

In How to Help Children and Adults with Autism Talk About Their Emotions, Andrew Bondy, Ph.D. will discuss modifications and strategies to help people with autism effectively communicate about their emotions and other internal states, using vocal speech and augmentative devices. Dr. Bondy has over 30 years of experience working with children and adults with autism and related developmental disabilities. He served as the Director of the Statewide Delaware Autistic Program for over a dozen years, where he and his wife, Lori Frost, a speech pathologist, pioneered the development of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), a unique augmentative/alternative training package that allows children and adults



Kathleen Dyer



Andy Bondy

(Continued from page 5)

with autism and other communication deficits to initiate and develop functional communication. PECS has received worldwide recognition for focusing on the social components of communication. Dr. Bondy is the co-founder of Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc., an internationally based team of specialists from many fields working together to promote the integration of the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) within functional activities. He developed the *Pyramid Approach to Education* as a comprehensive approach to establishing effective learning environments for children and adults with autism and other severe learning impairments. The Pyramid Approach is a combination of broad-spectrum behavior analysis and functional communication strategies. Dr. Bondy continues his life's work designing educational plans for children with autism that emphasize communicative opportunities across all environments and social communication in enhanced settings.

Conference registration form is available on page 22 and at the CT FEAT web site.

A panel discussion of questions from the audience will follow the presentations, from 2:30 to 3:00 PM.

Registration information and driving directions can be found on page 22 of this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter. Registration fee includes light continental breakfast, mid-morning coffee break and buffet luncheon. Continuing education credits will be available for educators and behavior analysts. For more information, please visit the CT FEAT web site at www.ctfeat.org or call the CT FEAT information hotline at (860) 571-3888.□

About Our Organizations

CONNECTICUT FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE AUTISM TREATMENT
CT FEAT, Inc. is a non-profit organization, providing information and support to the families of children with autism spectrum disorders throughout Connecticut. Resources include the CT FEAT Information Telephone Hotline, free newsletters for families and professionals, and more. Details are available at the information-packed CT FEAT Web site, www.ctfeat.org, or by calling the Information Hotline at 860-571-3888.

LITCHFIELD COUNTY AUTISM SPECTRUM ASSOCIATION, INC.
LACASA is a non-profit partnership that was established in 2001 by a group of dedicated families and professionals. Its members have a keen interest in ensuring that individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families have local access to quality support and services. More information is available at the LACASA Web site, uhaweb.hartford.edu/LACASA.

THE RIVER STREET AUTISM PROGRAM
The RSAP (www.crec.org/ss/divisionunits/rspschool) provides intensive year-round services for children with autism using the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) through a full day, pre-school program at the Coltsville School in Hartford, and in homes and public school programs throughout Connecticut.

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

BOOK REVIEW



The Autism Sourcebook: Everything You Need to Know About Diagnosis, Treatment, Coping and Healing

By Karen Siff Exhorn

(Reviewed by Grace Conroy)

Can too much information be a bad thing? These days the market seems overcrowded with books on autism. Many of these books are of dubious value, even though most seem to find some prominent autism expert (often business or professional colleagues of the author) to endorse them.

In such an environment, it can be very difficult for parents to choose which books will be the most helpful for their particular child. Probably the best single book to start you on your reading journey is Karen Siff Exhorn's excellent **The Autism Sourcebook: Everything You Need to Know About Diagnosis, Treatment, Coping and Healing** (2005).

This book has been endorsed by many luminaries in the autism world, including Temple Grandin, Suzanne and Bob Wright (co-founders of *Autism Speaks*), and leading autism researchers Geraldine Dawson, Catherine Lord, and Fred Volkmar. And this is definitely one case where the endorsements are merited.

No other autism book so nicely balances the provision of practical information, reliable research, and emotional support. As Fred Volkmar, M.D., of Yale University's Child Study Center writes in his Forward to the book:

...Karen provides a compelling and highly moving account of her own experiences as a mother of a child with autism. She introduces and describes the many treatments she came across in a nonjudgmental and even-handed manner. As she notes, some treatments for autism now have a strong scientific basis, whereas others are backed only by a handful of case reports. Some of these unproven treatments will be researched over the coming years – and only some of them will be shown to be effective. For parents who are struggling to decide which treatments are right for their children, this book will be an invaluable aide.

Of course, no book is ever going to tell you "everything you need to know." It's more like "everything you need to know to get treatment started as quickly as possible." With its extensive bibliography of recommended books and web sites, the book also lays the groundwork for future research, as the interest or need may arise.

While there are some professionals who may find this book of interest, it's principally written for parents. As a parent herself, Siff Exhorn lived through the whole diagnosis and treatment

(Continued on page 20)

ABA, VB and RDI: What's a Parent to Do?

(Robert Schramm, MA, BCBA)



Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is currently the most popular and proven educational approach to supporting the development of children with autism and related disorders. Applied behavioral autism interventions are becoming consistently better in the process of teaching children toward the concept of autism recovery. Verbal Behavior (VB), being one of the most advanced and effective approaches, has moved traditional ABA beyond the rote, repetitive, table learning of its past and developed it into a natural, relationship building, holistic learning program. Along with the ever growing success rate of modern ABA, there is an ever growing body of scientific evidence supporting its use. For these reasons ABA has become the most commonly accepted path for families of children with autism to follow throughout much of the world.

In addition, ABA is currently the only autism therapy recommended for long-term benefit by the United States Surgeon General. As a treatment for autism, the Surgeon General's report on Mental Health, 1999, states, "Thirty years of research demonstrated the efficacy of applied behavioral methods in reducing inappropriate behavior and in increasing communication, learning, and appropriate social behavior."

Relationship Development Intervention (RDI®) was developed and is taught by Steven E. Gutstein Ph.D. Dr. Gutstein's conceptual work can be found in the book "Solving the Relationship Puzzle," Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2002). RDI® is a social relationship development program designed to enable parents to teach "dynamic intelligence skills" to their children. Its stated goals include helping children with autism become more flexible thinkers and to adapt more easily to ever-changing environments. The program is designed to give children with autism the tools needed to make real and lasting friendships.

Dr. Gutstein designed his approach specifically to teach to the areas of social experience-sharing in which most children with autism are deficient. Dr. Gutstein studied the needs of children who had learned many skills through the teaching procedures of traditional ABA. He concluded that the procedures used to teach these children did not foster social experience-sharing and in many instances obstructed the development of social goals. Therefore, from a desire to find a better way, he began to develop and then trademarked his recommended compilation of teaching procedures and curriculum called RDI.®

The developers of RDI® claim that their program addresses the core deficit of autism. This claim to teach to autism's

"core deficit" serves the developers intent of making RDI® the most important therapy option. Dr. Gutstein's Connections Center (www.rdicconnect.com) has adopted a dogged determination to protect both the quality of his intervention and the financial gains of their trademarked educational approach.

In contrast no one owns or controls ABA/VB. There is no opportunity for an individual to make blanket statements about what autism is, what information should cost, who should be allowed to make developments to the approach, or what procedures all other followers of the approach are expected to accept. ABA/VB is guided solely by the science of how we learn and scientific data supporting its use. Because of this ABA/VB does not claim a core deficit to autism. In my study and experience, autism is not a thing that has a core deficit. In most cases, autism is a biological predisposition to a combination of several specific behavior deficits that children exhibit. This behavioral predisposition can manifest itself in severe pervasive developmental delays. Therefore, having an intervention that only focuses on a single "core deficit" is ineffective because it ignores the other areas of deficit that are often a part of autism.

A parent's choice should not focus on which program is better, but which RDI® goals and program recommendations can be used to help boost the social development intervention of their ABA/VB program.

Although there is anecdotal evidence that RDI® has helped some advanced and naturally vocal children with autism in meaningful ways, I have seen no independent data supporting the use of RDI.® I have also heard anecdotal reports that RDI® is often lacking when attempting to help early learners, especially non-vocal learners and children demonstrating a strong desire for control. The belief in the greater ABA community is that foregoing the proven principles of ABA and focusing exclusively on RDI® is a potentially dangerous experiment for most families of children with autism with an unattractive risk to reward ratio.

While I agree with the criticism by RDI® proponents of how ABA procedures are sometimes used in intervention and educational programs, as limiting to a child's ability and desire to participate in relationship development, I also feel that to accept RDI® as a superior intervention is a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. RDI® used outside of the context of a good ABA/VB program is an attempt to ignore reinforcement, extinction, motivation, and other proven principles of behavior. Thus, parents using any program that does not teach to these important principles often flounder when things do not go as they are told to expect. A good ABA/VB program keeps the scientific principles of behavior in the forefront while approaching the art of teaching as a fluid process predicated on the desires of the child.

RDI® is in many cases an approach and set of goals that can strengthen the social interaction and relationship development skills of a child in an ABA/VB program. However, rather than pointing to a "core deficit" of autism ABA/VB recognizes that children with autism are affected in different ways. Consequently, individual children have differing sets of developmental delays in four learning areas. These areas are behavior, general learning skills, communication, and social

interaction. Teaching to each of these deficits takes a special consideration. If you are to teach toward recovery, you must teach to all of these deficits in any proportion they present themselves in the case of your specific child.

It should be noted that even the best ABA/VB programs only offer a very general description of how to teach your child social skills, often through instructions, responses, artificial reinforcement, and social scripting. However, I agree with the premise that relationship development comes not from what a child is told or asked to do but from what he chooses to do in order to maintain an interaction with a particular person.

Although the scientific research demonstrating the effectiveness of RDI® procedures is either nonexistent or currently not independently replicated, my opinion is that it is quite possibly a step in the right direction toward finding the missing parts of this piece to the autism intervention puzzle. The RDI® program uses non-verbal games, social referencing, and declarative statements in large quantities, among other program recommendations, to teach to the fourth category of learning deficit that comes with autism, social interaction, or more specifically the experience-sharing part of social interaction.

Using the principles of ABA in concert with the procedures of VB best prepares you to address all four deficit categories of behavior, general learning skills, communication, and social interaction. However, by also including the procedures of RDI® in your child's program you might be able to address social experience-sharing deficits more systematically and effectively. A parent's choice should not focus on which program is better, but which RDI® goals and program recommendations can be used to help boost the social development intervention of their ABA/VB program.

(Continued on page 19)

DVD REVIEW



Going to the Heart of Autism: The Relationship Development Intervention Program

By Dr. Steven Gutstein

(Reviewed by Laura DeAngelo)

Relationship Development Intervention (RDI®) is a parent-centered and home-based intervention method that has been growing in popularity with families and service providers. RDI® targets what some see as the core deficit of autism, the inability to form true social and emotional relationships with others, and it is being recognized as an important addition to other therapeutic interventions. Families who have children in academic programs based on applied behavior analysis (ABA), and others, are more and more frequently looking to RDI® as a means to meet crucial social development goals that are often lacking in center-based programs.

RDI® was developed by Dr. Steven Gutstein, a psychologist whose practice is based in Houston, Texas, in order to assess and systematically address the social and emotional deficits in children, teens and older people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

As with any meaningful intervention model, the full RDI® program continues to evolve. Currently there are 28 levels with hundreds of objectives. This DVD focuses on the first eight stages: Emotion Sharing, Social Referencing, Coordinated Actions, Variations (in coordinated actions), Reversals and Transformations, Co-regulation, Caring for Others, and Collaboration. The DVD includes numerous videos of families working on each stage in the program, and presents a compelling record of the progress in relationship skills of those with autism as they move through the stages of the program.

Background on RDI®

Studies have shown that, despite their level of speech, IQ, or education, the great majority of adults with ASD are not able to live independently, hold jobs, have close friendships, or achieve other "quality of life" goals. A deficit in relationship skills is directly responsible for the inability of many individuals with autism to achieve a successful quality of life.

According to Gutstein, people with autism lack "dynamic intelligence" and see the world only through a "static" system. They are therefore unable to form social relationships, which are based on fluid, dynamic thoughts and interactions. The RDI® program systematically develops dynamic intelligence so that children and others with autism can achieve the flexible thinking critical to regulate social interactions. Improved ability to form social connections can enhance the quality of life for the person with autism and those around him or her.

Stages of Typical Social Skill Development – A Framework for Intervention

Typical children develop social skills in discrete, predictable stages, starting from the ability to share emotion through the face and progressing through social referencing (using eye contact and gaze to give and receive social information), coordination of action, and other higher-level skills. Gutstein employs this developmental relationship skill hierarchy to program for what he calls a "do-over" for each area of deficit, a way to systematically develop each skill that was "missed" earlier in the person's development.

For example, if the child is already able to share emotion through the face, the program for that person would begin with goals related to *Social Referencing*, the next stage. When that stage is mastered, the person would move on to the next stage, *Coordination of Action*, and so on. The stages build sequentially on each other, so only one stage can be worked on at a time.

An Overview of RDI® Implementation

There are certainly elements of ABA in RDI®. An understanding of how to efficiently manipulate antecedents and consequences, prompt hierarchies, fading and shaping procedures, and other ABA fundamentals is useful in RDI®, as in any so-

phisticated intervention. However, families have implemented successful RDI® programs without prior training in ABA. It should be noted that, although RDI® does employ some of the principles of behavior science, the terminology is different from that used in ABA.



At the start of the program, a certified RDI® consultant evaluates the child's relationship skills (the "Relationship Development Assessment" or RDA), and develops written objectives appropriate for the child, based on the RDI® program's hierarchy of relationship skills. For example, a measurable objective to teach Social Referencing would be "The child will reference the coach's eye gaze and eye movements to locate a hidden object." An activity that would develop this skill is to hide something of interest to the child under one of three identical cups. You (the coach) would then say something like "We're gonna find the cookie! We're gonna find the cookie!" Then you show him with head nods "yes" or "no", speaking at the same time, where the cookie is. You look at each cup and say, "Hmm, I wonder if it's under here?" nodding "yes" or "no" as appropriate. Eye contact is maintained through enthusiastic affect, silly sounds, etc., not by saying "look at me."

You will need to model at first with words and perhaps help him physically put his hand on the right cup. When he (with your help at first) locates the object, you celebrate together; that is, you provide exaggerated social reinforcement. "YAY! YOU FOUND THE M&M! YUMMY!" Gradually you fade the verbal and physical prompts so your child is reading only your head nods for the information. After the child masters head nods, you would do the same thing with eye movements. Then you would move away from tabletop activities and work facial referencing into just about everything you do in the natural environment.

If my son asks where a toy is, I don't answer him with words. I just use my eyes and head movements to give him the answer. If we are about to cross the street, we stop together and he looks at me for the nod before we cross. If he is diving off the diving board, he waits at the top step of the board for my nod before he dives.

The Importance of Declarative Language

A critical element in all the RDI® stages is the coach's use of declarative language (commenting) with the child. Parents and teachers often do not realize that the majority of their communication with the child is in the form of imperatives – questions and commands.

Declarative language should be used the majority of the time (about 80% if possible) to encourage the child to share information and engage in the exchanges of others. With our son, we saw his speech and relatedness improve noticeably when we made the shift to declarative communication. We have encouraged the school to do this also.

(Continued on page 19)

**Find Out More About RDI®
At the CT FEAT Web Site
www.ctfeat.org**

RDI®: Effective Intervention or Effective Marketing?

This extensive, fully referenced article written by Suzanne Letso, M.A., BCBA, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder of the Connecticut Center for Child Development, and parent of a son with autism, examines the potentially significant benefits and the unsupported claims of Relationship Development Intervention® and is available to read or download at the CT FEAT web site. (Go to "Parent Opinions" under "Recommended Resources.")

Readers might also be interested in joining the **abaplrdrdi Listserv**. This group is for parents and professionals who acknowledge the benefits of good ABA or Verbal Behavior practices in educating their learners with autism, but want to explore how RDI® can fit into their child's program to address the missing pieces. It is a place to discuss any needs of your learners. This group especially welcomes those who have successfully implemented Verbal Behavior, Pivotal Response or eclectic ABA programs. Potential solutions from any therapeutic intervention can be freely discussed as solutions to problems without risk of offense. You can find the link to the **abaplrdrdi Listserv** at the CT FEAT web site. (Go to "Related Links" under "Recommended Resources.")

Also find the full version of Laura DeAngelo's article, **Relationship Development Intervention Program: DVD Review and Other Resources**, which includes the information presented in Laura's article published in this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter (beginning on page 8) and additional information on RDI seminars, books, support networks, and Laura's experience with RDI within her own family. ▀

Have You Visited Us Lately?

www.ctfeat.org

Autism Newsfeed

ABA Job Connections

Updated Conference Listing

CT FEAT Newsletter Archives

Recommended Resource Materials

ABA Programs and Consultants Listing

Research Articles on Effective Intervention

Info on Joining the CT FEAT PARENTS ONLY LISTSERV

Rachael's Special Day

(Donna Cohen)



It has been several months since Rachael was a Bat Mitzvah and only now can I reflect on the full significance of that very special day for our daughter and its influence on our family.

Two years earlier, when we joined the Emanuel Synagogue in West Hartford, I was somewhat taken aback that a Bat Mitzvah for Rachael seemed to simply be expected by the clergy and Hebrew School staff. I had my doubts. Rachael's language was limited, her behavior questionable. Her autism was the issue and I felt this was not something she was capable of handling. Never mind Rachael, I wondered if this was something that my husband and I were capable of handling!

But to the clergy and staff, autism was not an issue. We had a daughter who was going to be thirteen, thus, she would be a Bat Mitzvah. One afternoon when I had gone to chat with Rabbi Small about something completely unrelated, he caught me by surprise and said, "Before we get started let's pick a date" for Rachael's Bat Mitzvah. Had it not been for the surprise factor, I am quite sure this Bat Mitzvah would not have happened!

So now we had a date, but it was still close to two years away and I wasn't about to get my hopes too high. I anticipated that eventually these caring people would see why a Bat Mitzvah simply would not work out.

Amazingly, Rachael took to the Hebrew School class with relative ease. She worked diligently with her teacher, Carolyn, and the very patient aides at the school. Rachael looked forward to going to the synagogue for her class and getting her treat at the end, and she wrote the appointment on her calendar weekly. At first I would take along walkie-talkies and sit outside the room, just in case. But soon it became clear that the walkie-talkies were not necessary.

A full year went by and it was time to plan what Rachael would do on her Bat Mitzvah day. I thought that if she could learn the prayer before reading the Torah it would be quite an accomplishment. Naomi, her younger sister, and I did lots of modeling to help Rachael by singing and reviewing the prayers while driving in the car together. Rachael seemed to absorb the prayers simply through this repetition. It became apparent that she was also recognizing some of the Hebrew words. One of the things that surprised us most was that she could make the "ch" sound (as in L'Chaim). I had clearly underestimated her abilities.

Before I knew it, Rachael could recite the prayer that is said before and after reading a Torah portion, she could sing the prayers before we opened the ark and before we put the

Torah away, she could say the first line of the prayer "Shema" in Hebrew and she learned to read the first paragraph of this prayer in English.

Her always ambitious and fearless teacher, Carolyn, raised the bar even higher and suggested that Rachael should be able to give a speech. I appreciated Carolyn's vote of confidence in my daughter but again found myself wondering if this would actually happen. Yet week after week, Carolyn would patiently ask Rachael questions about synagogue. "What do you wear? Who do you sit with? What do you do?" and a speech was formed from Rachael's answers.

As the day approached, Cantor Cohn became very involved in preparing Rachael. It was very important to transfer her skills from the classroom into the sanctuary. Rabbi Small and Cantor Cohn patiently practiced the entire service, including walking around the empty synagogue with the Torah. Rachael liked this part of the service and labeled it "a parade." Our whole family and some wonderful friends came by to be part of the "congregation" so that Rachael could get used to having people sit in the sanctuary.

The day of her Bat Mitzvah was nerve wracking—for me. Rachael was doing just fine. We had struggled with the guest list, as we decided it was best to keep it somewhat small so as not to overwhelm her. We had chosen a Rosh Chodesh which fell on a Sunday so that the actual service would be brief.

Every Sunday morning we went to a nearby restaurant for her favorite M&M pancakes, a regular part of our routine surrounding Hebrew School. As busy as I was with the preparations, I made sure we didn't skip our routine and risk throwing the whole day off. So, at seven o'clock that morning I found myself watching Rachael enjoy her pancakes as usual while my own stomach was doing somersaults.



As the day unfolded it became clear that Rachael had indeed learned to read her speech, and so much more! She did a great job with her Bat Mitzvah service. Her speech was one of the most powerful pieces of her Bat Mitzvah day for me.

Rachael, giving a speech! Who would have thought?

One of the more amusing memories of the day is recalling when my brother, Bill, carried the Torah around the synagogue. The bells on top caught Rachael's attention and she was walking behind him jumping up to ring them. It was a very "Rachael moment" that I cherish.

What did this day mean to Rachael? Really, I am not sure if she understood that this was a very special event. For Hal, Naomi and me, it was amazing. We discovered that Rachael was more capable of meeting challenges than we realized and that it is important to all of us that we give her opportunities to shine. ■



Bowling For Behavior

How I Use Powerful Rewards to Improve Behavior

(Will Wilkin)

My son Justin is a bright first-grader with autism. Around late September he reverted to some problematic behaviors in school that I thought had been extinguished in kindergarten—hitting or kicking others (instead of using words), throwing objects, or screaming. I knew I'd have to do something about this situation and do it fast.

I devised a personalized behavior plan using a weekly chart of columns for each day of the school week and rows for the target behaviors I chose to address - "No hitting or kicking or throwing," and "Use words with friends." I addressed one undesirable target behavior (aggression) to extinguish and one positive target behavior, which could also serve as an appropriate alternative, to cultivate.

Justin's school day was divided into 3 sections and he could earn stars for not engaging in the inappropriate behaviors (hitting, kicking or throwing) for each part of the day. Justin could earn a total of 3 stars each day. Special weekly rewards (Chuck E Cheese on Friday, or bowling) were chosen because I felt these would be VERY motivating. At first Justin needed to earn 10 stars for the week (out of a possible 15) to earn the trip to Chuck E Cheese, or bowling, and as he gained more control of his behavior I upped it to 12 stars for the week to earn the grand prize.

I also had a daily "response cost" consequence to be applied if there was any hitting or kicking or throwing. He lost access to toys he loved for that day. So he could screw up just a bit without losing Chuck E Cheese on Friday and yet still have unpleasant, more immediate consequences for aggressive behaviors (losing access to favorite toys).

The chart also had a row for daily rewards of things Justin loves (strawberry milkshake, baking cookies, 30 minutes on Dad's computer, etc) For "Use words with friends" he could earn a heart for every instance. Some days he earned MANY hearts and other days only 1 or even none at times. The hearts earned the daily reward and the stars earned the big weekly prize.

Can you believe the system had an amazingly positive effect from the very first day? His teachers loved the chart right from the start, and worked with me on the plan. Justin has had some ups and downs, but this homespun token system has been pretty effective!

One key to its success was to work closely with his teachers (including his aide) to set clear behavioral guidelines for Justin at school, with reasonable and rising expectations,

backed up by powerful rewards. The target behaviors for school were determined by his teachers because they knew what the issues were there, and reinforcer choice was my area of expertise. Knowing my son as well as I do, I could offer choices that would likely be highly motivating—with the extra bonus of spending fun time with me! Work hard, play hard.

We've made some changes along the way and now use a daily rather than weekly chart. We have changed the target behaviors as his needs have changed, and now there are several positive behaviors targeted (follow directions, greet friends with words, use quiet voice in a group, etc.).

Another important part of the plan is the daily communication book that goes back and forth from home to school, with the daily behavior charts and comments. Justin knows I read the book every day right after school. The book is important to him because it governs his rewards at home. It works GREAT!

One final note: the completed charts also function as an excellent data-collection method to help the team assess whether he is making progress in behavioral goals, and what kinds of problems persist, or what circumstances provoke problem behaviors. His teachers' notes and comments are especially helpful for the latter.

*Editor's Note: Parents and other teachers who would like to learn more about using effective reinforcement and individualized token systems, and reducing unwanted behaviors while increasing appropriate behaviors in home, school and the community, will find **The Pyramid Approach to Education in Autism**, by Andy Bondy and Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, a valuable resource. The book was reviewed in the Spring 2006 CT FEAT Newsletter, available online at www.ctfeat.org. More information about the book can be found at www.pecs.com.*



Respite Options for Families

(Beth Lambert)

You and your spouse have not been out to dinner without the children in a year. Your cousin is getting married next month and the children are not invited. Your daughter has a concert at school and wants both of her parents to attend. For parents of typical children, these scenarios mean calling the neighborhood babysitter. This is often not an option for parents of a child with autism.

Parents of typical children sometimes have difficulty finding a way to take a break from their children, but for parents of children with autism it can be almost impossible. The need to "get away" and recharge your batteries and tend to your

marriage is even more important when you have a special needs child. Funding the babysitter/respice provider can be difficult, but what seems to be the biggest problem is finding someone we trust to stay with our children - whether it's for a few hours or overnight.

There are not many respice options available in Connecticut, but there are some. It takes some planning and energy to pull off respice time, but it's important. Whether you need to get away to give yourself a break, to spend time with your spouse, or to spend time with your typical children, everyone deserves some respice time.

The Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) has opened respice centers throughout the state. If your child has a case file with DMR, you can contact your caseworker & ask for a respice application. It does take time to complete the application, have it approved, and meet with the respice staff. If you have a specific date in mind, it is best to apply for that date early, but there is no guarantee you will receive the date you request. Some DMR respice centers are open during school vacations and the summer weeks. Contact your DMR caseworker to find out which centers and days are available. You cannot access these respice centers if your child doesn't qualify for DMR services. Call Infoline at 211 to get the location and phone number of your local DMR office.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is another state agency that provides respice services. When you contact DCF it is important that you explain you are asking for voluntary services so the agency understands you are asking for help and the family is not in crisis. Again, it will take time to arrange for the respice services, so try to plan in advance. DCF not only provides the funding for respice, but also has some providers with whom they can put you in contact. It's not clear how long voluntary services will continue to pay for respice providers. It may be possible to continue to use the DCF provider once "services run out" and pay out of pocket. To begin the process of applying for Voluntary Services through DCF you must call the DCF hotline at 1-800-842-2288 and follow the prompt for Voluntary Services.

The most commonly used respice provider is a family member. A grandparent, aunt or uncle is often willing to stay with the children while the parents take a weekend to get away. A neighbor or friend is another option. These options are often successful because the parents and child know the relative/friend and are comfortable with him. It is important that the provider knows the child well. Does he understand the child's means of communication? Does he know the child's routine? His behavior plan? All of these are important questions to ask before leaving your child with a relative or friend.

Some parents have had success using the paraprofessionals from their child's school as a respice provider. The advantage to this is that the provider knows the child's strengths/weaknesses/quirks as well as behavior plan. I've heard of

(Continued on page 21)



Connecticut Autism Pilot Program Seeks Participants and Providers

(Tricia Winter)

Connecticut considers itself to have has one of the best mental health systems in the nation, yet it remains one of only two States, Mississippi being the other, which provides services to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) through age 18, but beyond that age, only to those with mental retardation. Thus approximately 50% of Connecticut's adults with ASD, about 5,000 to 7,000 citizens, are not eligible to receive disability services.

This public policy issue has been the focus of tireless advocacy for the past several years, by families and organizations such as the Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC). Representative James Amann, Senator Toni Harp and Senator Judith Freedman along with a number of other legislators lent their support to the grass-roots effort to help pass the Autism Spectrum Pilot Program legislation for adults.

Services will include employment, living, and community supports. They will be based on the level of need of each individual and will thus vary widely.

On Friday August 26, 2006, Governor Jodi Rell, joined by advocates and legislators, ceremonially signed Senate Bill 703, with the comments "The bill we sign today establishes a pilot program with the goal of helping those adults with ASD lead lives that are independent and functional...The step we take today signifies new hope for our Connecticut residents with ASD, and the families and organizations that care for them."

Under the Senate Bill, which provides \$1 million for the new program, the Commissioner of Mental Retardation in consultation with the Commissioners of Social Service and Mental Health and Addiction Services, will establish a model of service delivery for adults with autism spectrum disorders who do not have mental retardation. This will be accomplished through a pilot program begun in October 2006. The Connecticut Autism Pilot Program will establish eligibility requirements for participants, identify appropriate services, and coordinate those services for a number of participants. After two years, a report must be filed with the legislature's Public Health Committee, making recommendations on how the state can better address the needs of adults with autism spectrum disorders.

The effort began with an earlier legislatively mandated proto-pilot research and development project supported with a \$250,000 appropriation in the Connecticut's 2005-

(Continued on page 21)

UConn Autism Studies Looking for Participants

Study of Children with Excellent Outcomes

Dr. Deborah Fein, collaborating with Dr. Marianne Barton and Dr. Inge-Marie Eigsti, is continuing her studies of children who have moved off the autism spectrum. This federally-funded study means they have convinced reviewers that this is a real phenomenon (good news!).

The UConn researchers are looking for children aged 9-15 (but are interested in younger children and would test them around age 9) who:

- (1) have a former diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder but no longer meet criteria for autism and are doing well academically and socially, OR
- (2) have high functioning autism, OR
- (3) could serve in the typical development comparison group.

Friendly graduate students will come to your home and give the child some cognitive tests, and also ask you to fill out some forms about the child's current functioning, and let them look at early reports or videotapes to verify early diagnosis. The children will be told that the study is on children who talked early vs. those who talked late, so they needn't hear any details of their own history that they don't know. An OPTIONAL additional part of the study will be an exciting trip to Yale to have an MRI!

For more info, please contact Deborah.Fein@uconn.edu and/or Molly.Helt@uconn.edu.

Verbal and Nonverbal Language Studies

Dr. Inge-Marie Eigsti, a Professor of Clinical Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscientist in the UConn Department of Psychology, is conducting several studies of learning skills with children on the autism spectrum.

One study focuses on language development and how it is related to learning strategies in autism. Another study looks at non-verbal gestures in children and adolescents with autism, and how gestures interact with spoken language. A final study of joint attention includes both a session in the lab as well as an optional brain imaging (MRI) session.

All the studies involve IQ and language assessments; if desired, you may receive a clinical report of your child's scores. Children should be between ages 2-18 with diagnoses of PDD, autism or Asperger's, and may be verbal or non-verbal, depending on the study. You will be compensated for your time.

Please contact Inge-Marie Eigsti at (860) 486-6021 or via email at inge-marie.eigsti@uconn.edu for more information; you may also visit our web site at eigsti.psy.uconn.edu.

Was Your Child Diagnosed With an Autism Spectrum Disorder Within the Last 2 Years?

Developmental-behavioral pediatrician Dr. Thyde Dumont-Mathieu and her colleagues are conducting a research project about parents' experiences throughout the processes of diagnosis and obtaining intervention services. Interviews can be held in a location convenient to you, such as your child's Birth-to-Three office, preschool program, or other sites in your community.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences please contact Dr. Dumont-Mathieu at (860) 545-8944. ◻

High Risk Baby Siblings Project at Yale Looking for Participants

**Your Next Child Can Be Monitored from Birth for
Vulnerabilities Associated with Autism**

At the Yale Child Study Center in New Haven, researchers are studying how infants from birth to 24 months engage visually with people and objects around them. Yale is looking to expand participation in this project and is actively seeking to enroll parents of children with autism who are pregnant. If selected for the study, your baby will watch brief animated videos and look at pictures. He or she will play with toys, listen to sounds and interact with experienced professionals. Babies usually love it and parents find the feedback extremely informative. Babies who participate are monitored closely for any signs of autism from birth to 24 months, and beyond. Compensation is available for participants.

To learn more about participating in this study, please contact Irene Zilber by email at Irene.Zilber@yale.edu or by phone at (203) 785-6237. Also, to learn more about this and related research projects please visit www.autism.fm/babysibs

Other research participation opportunities through the Yale Developmental Disabilities Clinic can be found at their web site, www.med.yale.edu/chldstudy/autism/ ("Research Studies") or call Lori Klein at (203) 785-5759. ◻



Visit Us on the Web

www.ctfeat.org

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES*

This conference listing focuses on effective autism treatment practices that have been validated by research.

This listing is periodically updated at the CT FEAT web site. If you know about an event that may be suitable for inclusion, kindly send the information to editorctfeat@aol.com. Please note that CT FEAT accepts no advertising.

Updates are also circulated among the subscribers to CT FEAT's "parents only" listserv discussion group. Details about joining the listserv are available at the CT FEAT web site (www.ctfeat.org) or by calling the CT FEAT Information Hotline at 860-571-3888.

**Please verify registration deadlines with event sponsors.*

Friday April 13, 2007

8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

The Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies 2nd Annual Northeast Conference on Autism:

Language and Reading for Children on the Autism Spectrum

Shrewsbury, MA

Keynote Speakers: Andy Bondy, Ph.D., Tristram Smith, Ph.D. Conference includes workshops presented by Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCBA, Ann Filer, M.S., and Wendy Kozma, M.S.

Learn about current issues in evidence-based practice in autism treatment, distinguish between fads and evidence-based methods; learn fluency procedures for instructional approaches in children with autism; learn to use behaviorally-based strategies to teach joint attention and reciprocal language skills in children with autism; learn to develop scripts using play sets, create video modeling tapes, and provide video instruction to children with autism. More information is available at www.behavior.org.

Friday April 27, 2007

Providence RI

FEAT/RI 4th Annual Autism for Parents, Educators and Professionals: Sharing the Knowledge Keynote Speaker:

Joanne Gerenser, PhD, CCC-SLP, Director of the Eden II Programs. Topics to include: Enhancing Language in Children with Autism; Adolescents with ASD in Transition from School to Adult Life; Developing Effective Behavioral Interventions. Special parent registration fees beginning at \$50. Brochure and registration available at www.featri.org or contact: info@featri.org (401)739-7384.

Friday April 27 and/or Saturday April 28, 2007

8:30 AM – 4 PM

Plainview, NY

Functional Analysis of Severe Behavior Disorders

Presenter: Brian Iwata, Ph.D., BCBA

Sponsored by Elija (www.elija.org)

Two comprehensive workshops highly recommended for anyone who has a child or student with severe self-injury or aggression, and for all school staff responsible for conducting functional behavior assessments (FBAs). Day 1: **Functional Analysis for the Assessment & Treatment of Severe and Challenging Behavior** Day 2: **Advanced Topics in the Treatment of Severe Behavior Disorders** (Participants may register for 1 or both days. Limited seating available.)

Dr. Brian Iwata is currently Research Foundation Professor of

Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Florida, Director of the Florida Center on Self-Injury, and Co-Director of the University of Florida Autism Program. His primary areas of interest are applied behavior analysis, developmental disabilities, functional analysis of severe behavior disorders, and program evaluation. His work has focused on behavioral aspects of developmental disabilities, including behavioral acquisition (ranging from basic skills training to community preparation),



CONNECTICUT ABA

PRESENTS Third Annual Conference

Keynote Speaker Michael D. Powers, Psy.D.

Dr. Michael D. Powers of the Center for Children with Special Needs, will present the keynote address, *Expanding Evidence-Based Practice*, at this year's annual CT-ABA conference. Other speakers include Joanne Gerenser, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, of Eden II Programs, John Molteni, Ph.D., BCBA, of the Center for Children with Special Needs, Peter Sturmey, Ph.D. of Queens College, Ruth Eren, Ed.D. of Southern Connecticut State University, William Ahearn, Ph.D., BCBA of New England Center for Children, and other speakers from organizations that specialize in the delivery of evidence-based services to children with autism.

Topics will include language development, toileting and feeding, ABA in therapeutic foster care, effects of instruction and feedback on staff and child behavior, conducting functional assessments, preference and reinforcement assessments, transition strategies, stereotypy, and teaching ABA to novices. Continuing education credits will be available to BCABAs and BCBAs (\$5 per credit). Conference registration fee is \$40 for CT-ABA members and \$75 for nonmembers. (Special discounted rates are available for student and parent members.) Lunch is not included in conference fee. A networking luncheon is available for \$20 additional. All attendees and members are invited to a *Meet & Greet* in the hotel lounge following the conference from 4-5PM.

The conference will be held on Saturday, April 28, 2007, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell, CT. Sign-in will begin at 8 AM. For more information about the conference please contact Kristin Marino, at marino@cccinc.org. Brochure and registration form can be found at the CT-ABA web site, www.ctaba.org.

eating disorders, self-injurious and aggressive behavior, and staff management. Much of Dr. Iwata's research has focused on the functional analysis of severe behavior disorders. Cost: \$75 per day for Elija members,; \$100 per day for non-members. For more information visit www.elija.org.

Friday April 27 and/or Saturday April 28, 2007

Philadelphia, PA

PECS International Conference: What's a Picture Worth?

Conference is aimed at parents, teachers and related school staff, pediatric professionals, and others who have a background in PECS, and those who have a general interest in innovative programs for supporting students and people of all ages with communication difficulties. Features speakers from around the world to present and share new developments in PECS. Keynote speakers will be Lori Frost, M.S., CCC-SLP presenting on *PECS: Past, Present, and Future*, and Andy Bondy, Ph.D., presenting on *PECS and Verbal Behavior*. Registration fee \$225 includes continental breakfast, lunch, refreshments and detailed handouts. Participants may purchase a Mini PECS Check-Up consultation session for \$49. For more information visit www.pecs.com or call (302) 368-2515.

Saturday April 28, 2007

8 AM – 5 PM

Cromwell, CT

The 3rd Annual Connecticut Association for Behavior Analysis Conference

Keynote Speaker: Michael D. Powers, Psy.D.

This conference offers presentations by Joanne Gerenser, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, of Eden II Programs, John Molteni, Ph.D., BCBA, of the Center for Children with Special Needs, Peter Sturmey, Ph.D. of Queens College, Ruth Eren, Ed.D. of Southern Connecticut State University, William Ahearn, Ph.D., BCBA of the New England Center for Children, and several other speakers from organizations that specialize in the delivery of evidence-based services to children with autism. Conference registration fee is \$40 for CT-ABA members and \$75 for nonmembers, with special discounted rates available for student and parent members. A networking luncheon is available for \$20 additional. See page 14 of this issue of the CT FEAT newsletter for more information. Brochure and registration form available at www.ctaba.org

Thursday May 3, & Friday May 4, 2007

Two -Day ABA Training

Princeton, NJ

Workshop includes:

Overview of Autism, Teaching Techniques, Principles of Reinforcement, Functional Analysis of Behavior, Functional Communication Strategies, Curriculum and IEP Development, and Classroom Design and Structure. The workshop will take place at the NJHA Conference Center. The cost is \$150 per person and includes all handouts, morning refreshments and lunch. CEU hours for professional certification are given for each day of training. For more information or to register contact Joni Truch at (609) 987-0099 or email joni.truch@edenservices.org.

ABA Conference Available Online

The Association for Behavior Analysis International is offering a recorded web cast of presentations from the 2007 Autism Conference, ***Progress and Challenges in the Behavioral Treatment of Autism***, online through April 27, 2007. The conference featured presentations by prominent researchers and authorities on the treatment of autism and was originally held at the Sheraton Hotel in Boston on February 2-4, 2007. For more information please visit www.abainternational.org and search "Autism conference web cast. Conference DVDs are also available for purchase through the web site."

Saturday May 19, 2007

8:30 AM - 3 PM

Waterbury, CT

Foundations and Innovations II: Effective Strategies for the Education of Children with Autism and Related Disorders.

Presenters: Dr. Andy Bondy, Dr. Kathleen Dyer and Dr. Deborah Fein, with guest keynote speaker Dr. Mary Beth Bruder. This conference aims to examine the roles of science-based research and the art of innovation in developing effective autism treatment programs. The conference will feature 4 presentations by noted experts. Topics include: "Are We There Yet? Building the Road from Scientifically Based Research to Effective Educational Policies for Children with Autism", "Research and the Recovery Phenomenon", "Assessment and Remediation of Speech Disorders in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders" and "How to Help Children and Adults with Autism Talk About Their Emotions". Panel discussion with Q&A.. The registration fee is \$75 for professionals and \$60 for parents and students. The fee includes continental breakfast, luncheon buffet, and continuing education credits (see page 22). For more information about speakers and topics, see pages 2 through 4 of this issue of the CT FEAT newsletter. A registration form is available on page 22. Information, brochure and registration forms are also available at the CT FEAT web site www.ctfeat.org, or by calling CT FEAT at 860-571-3888. Credit card payments, checks and purchase orders accepted.

Tuesday May 22, 2007

8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Albany, NY

Asperger's Disorder and Autism: An Update on Understanding and Interventions

Presenter: Fred Volkmar, M.D.

Topics include: . Understanding Autism, Asperger Syndrome and Related Conditions, Development of Diagnostic Concepts, Issues in Assessment, Selection, and Use of Assessment Instruments and Implications for Treatment, Differential Diagnosis, Issues in Treatment and Intervention Programs, Behavioral Approaches to Interventions, Social and Communication Skills Training, Psychopharmacology, Vocational and Adult Planning, Recent Research on Autism and Related Conditions, Brain Structure and Function, Eye Tracking and Understanding the Social Brain. For more information, please visit <http://www.neei.org>.

(Continued on page 16)

Friday May 25 – Tuesday 29, 2007

The 33rd Annual Association for Behavior Analysis International Convention

San Diego, CA

A bit of a distance from Connecticut, but his exciting event is an outstanding opportunity for all those interested in the philosophy, science, education, practice and teaching of behavior analysis. Topics include: autism, developmental disabilities, education, organizational behavior management and much more. If you are new to the ABA convention, you will have the opportunity to attend events designed especially for you on Saturday morning: "Newcomer's Session: Introduction to the Association for Behavior Analysis" and "For Newcomers: A Roadmap to the Autism Program at the ABA Convention, 2007." This year's convention will also feature: The B.F. Skinner Lecture Series, which brings distinguished scholars from compatible disciplines to behavior analysis, job placement, a bookstore, exhibitors, workshops, business meetings and other opportunities. For more information visit www.abainternational.org.

Friday June 1, 2007

8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Springfield, MA

Challenging Behavior in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Advances in Understanding and Treatment

Presenter: Michael Powers, Psy.D.

Dr. Powers will provide comprehensive information on the treatment of challenging behaviors associated with autism spectrum disorders including identifying learning strengths and weaknesses, utilizing strengths and accommodating weaknesses in treatment planning understanding the causes of challenging behavior: separating form and function, the importance of research-based assessment and treatment strategies, safeguarding health and dignity during treatment, social validity, and more. For more information, please visit <http://www.neei.org>.

Tuesday June 5, 2007

8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Springfield, MA

Asperger's Disorder & Autism: Advances in Understanding and Interventions

Presenter: Celine Saulnier, Ph.D.

Clinical Features of Autism and Related Conditions, Diagnostic Differentiation of Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and PDD-NOS, Case Examples, Diagnostic Assessment, Early Detection & Initial Diagnosis, Psychological Assessments for Low and High-Functioning Individuals, Diagnostic and Behavioral Assessments, Multidisciplinary Evaluations, Educational and Therapeutic Programming, Issues in Treatment and Intervention, Applied Behavior Analysis and Empirically Validated Methods Inclusion: To Include or Not To Include?, Social and Communication Interventions, Social Skills Interventions, Conversation Training, Emotional Regulation and Adaptive Behavior Training, more.

For more information, please visit <http://www.neei.org>.

Friday June 08, 2007

8:15 AM

Princeton, NJ

The 13th Annual Eden Institute Foundation's Princeton Lecture Series on Autism: Affecting the Research and Service Agenda

Guests speakers include Dr. Fred Volkmar; Dr. Martha Herbert and Dr. Michael Wigler.

The cost is \$130 per person and includes handouts, morning refreshments and lunch. For more information contact joni.truch@edenservices.org or call Joni at (609) 987-0099

Monday July 23 – Friday July 27, 2007

Eastham, MA

Autism and Asperger Syndrome: From Assessment to Treatment

Presenter: Michael Powers, Psy.D.

Symposium Description: With the incidence of autism, Asperger Syndrome and related pervasive developmental disorders now at 1 in 166, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) have become a widespread concern for mental health practitioners, educators, and parents. This symposium synthesizes current research and practice on the etiology, diagnosis, assessment, treatment, and evaluation of ASDs. Participants will learn to distinguish diagnostic issues for various ASDs, and the relationship between core neuropsychological assets and deficits to learning, social, communication, and behavioral issues that may be present from early childhood through young adulthood. The goal of this symposium is to teach mental health practitioners how to provide state-of-the-art care based on current research and understanding to support the range of needs presented by those with ASDs and their families. For a schedule of each day's topics and more information, please visit <http://www.neei.org>

Monday July 30 – Friday August 3, 2007

2007 National Autism Conference

State College, PA

This Penn State mega-conference will provide comprehensive, evidence-based information to assist educators, providers, and families in developing effective educational and therapeutic programming for all students with autism spectrum disorders. Participants in this exceptionally comprehensive learning opportunity will have access to training in: research findings concerning autism spectrum disorders to assessment, instruction, and progress determination, including specific communication; appropriate interventions, materials, and progress-monitoring practices based on continuous instructional evidence in the areas of cognition, language, social skills, and motor skills; identification, analysis and application of evidence-based practices for the treatment of students with autism spectrum disorders in cognition, communication, and social and motor skill; designing practical and evidence-based instructional plans for students with autism spectrum disorders in order to have them progress in the general education curriculum, with specific accommodations in language, cognition, and social and motor skills; incorporating the use of instructional technology and visual-graphic organizers into the instruction of students with autism spectrum disorders in order to increase organizational skills and improve achievement;

and relating specific assessment and intervention procedures to the general education curriculum and academic standards and benchmarks, including specific applications to communication-based approaches. The speaker list includes numerous experts on effective autism treatment and other noteworthy presenters. Saul Axelrod, Ph.D, Margaret Bauman, M.D., Vince Carbone, Ed.D, Carol Grey, Eutasia Cutler, Brian Iwata, Ph.D., BCBA, Rick Kubina, Jr., Ph.D., BCBA, Nancy Minshew, M.D., Brenda Smith-Myles, Ph.D., Bobby Newman, Ph.D., BCBA, Rhea Paul, Ph.D., Gerald Schook, Ph.D., BCBA, Mark Sundberg, Ph.D., BCBA, Julie Vargas, Ph.D., Pamela Wolfberg, Ph.D., more. The National Autism Conference will take place at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel. However, due to high enrollment, some sessions may be held on the Penn State University Park campus. CECs. Information available at www.outreach.psu.edu/Conference/autism.aspx

Save the Date!

October 11 and 12, 2007

BERKSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS & THERAPY 28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Amherst, MA

Invited Speakers: Brian Iwata, Dorothea Lerman, Richard Foxx, James Carr, Mark Dixon, David Palmer, Gina Green, Mark Sundberg, Raymond Miltenberger. Proposals due by June 1, 2007. For more information see www.babat.org, or contact Alan Harchik, Ph.D., BCBA at harchik@psych.umass.edu.

Nov. 1-2, 2007

NYSABA Annual Conference

Verona, NY

Keynote Speakers: Jon S. Bailey, Ph.D. *The Right to Effective Behavioral Treatment*, Peter F. Gerhardt, Ed.D. will address vocational skills and sexuality for the ASD population., Jennifer Zarcone, Ph.D., *Positive Behavior Support: One Way That Behavior Analysts are Finding Their Heart*, Jon Bailey Ph.D., *Ethics and Values in Behavior Analysis: Do Our Consumers Know What They Are? Do we?* ☐

OTHER PRESENTATIONS OF INTEREST

The Autism Society of Connecticut (ASCONN) provides a more comprehensive listing service through its "Autism in Connecticut" blog where you will find information on a broad range of autism and related presentations, support group activities, etc. Check it out at www.autismsocietyofct.org.

Saturday April 28, 2007

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Hartford, CT

The Autism Society of Connecticut 17th Annual State-wide Conference on Autism: You're Going to Love These Kids!

Presenters: Dr. Paula Kluth and Dr. Lianne Holliday-Willey
Dr. Paula Kluth is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Literature at Syracuse University. She is a former special education teacher and has served as a

classroom teacher and as a consulting teacher. Her presentation, ***You're Going to Love These Kids! Best Practices for Inclusion of ASD Students*** is based on her best selling book *You're Going to Love This Kid!* She will provide participants with strategies that work toward the goal of full inclusion. Dr. Kluth combines relevant research with lessons learned from her experience as a teacher. Topics will include: planning challenging multi-media lessons, enhancing literacy through adaptation of materials, examining the attitudes, values and actions that support inclusive education, and effectively collaborating with families. Dr. Liane Holliday-Willey will present *Cue the Mind*, her program to support students with Asperger Syndrome utilizing 7 cornerstones of effective support. Dr. Willey will explore these supports with insight from her life on the spectrum and her professional life as an educator and researcher. Registration fee is \$65 for ASCONN members, \$85 for nonmembers. Conference includes continental breakfast, lunch, exhibits, vendors and bookstore. CEUs available. Presented by ASCONN. Visit www.autismsocietyofct.org for registration and information or call 888-453-4975.

Wednesday May 9

Waterbury, CT

IDEA 2004 Regulations and Implications Conference

Presented by The Klebanoff Institute of Special Education and the University of Connecticut A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disorders. Speakers will be Alexa Posny (Invited), Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education and Jeanne M. Kincaid, J.D. Various topical workshops. For more information, please visit UCONN UCEDD website at: www.uconnucedd.org.

AREA HAPPENINGS

April 22, 2007

Autism Awareness Day With the New York Mets



Join AUTISIM SPEAKS and other members of the autism community at Shea Stadium as the Mets face the Atlanta Braves for a special Autism Awareness Month event. For information on purchasing tickets visit www.autismspeaks.org/sponsoredevents
Or call (914) 934-5138.

May 6, 2007

THE CONNECTICUT AUTISM SPECTRUM RESOURCE CENTER 9TH ANNUAL WALK FOR AUTISM

Brooksvale Park, Hamden CT

Fundraiser

Not only will we be walking, this will be year one for the **RUN FOR AUTISM** as well. The 10k run will begin bright and early at 8:00 AM followed by the Walk for Autism, a 3 Mile Family Walk on Linear Trail, at 10:30 AM.

All running teams welcome! Come and show your corporate support for the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center! Prizes will be awarded. Call CT-ASRC at 203-248-5222 for more info or visit their web site at www.ct-asrc.org.

(Continued on page 18)

June 10, 2007

Greater Hartford Walk Now for Autism

Elizabeth Park, Hartford
Sponsored by AUTISM SPEAKS
Plan ahead for a fun family time in



beautiful Elizabeth Park, just in time for rose season at the world famous Rose Garden there! Learn more about forming or joining a team for this annual event. Autism Speaks recently merged with both the National Alliance for Autism Research (NAAR) and Cure Autism Now (CAN) to form a potent national organization dedicated to increasing awareness of autism and helping to solve the autism puzzle by funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and cure for autism. Learn more about Autism Speaks and the Walk at www.autismwalk.org/hartford.

Dr. Deborah Fein of UCONN will be speaking at the Kick-Off Reception on Tuesday, April 24, 2007, at the Wampanoag Country Club, West Hartford.

June 10, 2007

Westchester-Fairfield Walk Now for Autism

Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY
Sponsored by AUTISM SPEAKS for families in the Fairfield/Westchester area.

The South Fairfield/Westchester Kick-Off Luncheon will be on Thursday, April 12, 2007, at the Westchester Country Club, Rye, NY. The North Fairfield Cocktail Reception Kick-Off will be held on Tuesday, April 24, 2007, at the Westport Coutry Playhouse Rehearsal Studio, Westport, CT. Information available at www.autismwalk.org/westfair.

May 6, 2007

1—3 PM

Torrington, CT

Rhythms of Grace

Play-based worship service for all families. The monthly services offer families an opportunity to introduce children to group worship in a supportive environment. The program is open to all families. Trinity Episcopal Church (860-482-6027) www.trinitytorrington.org.



May 20, 2007

Plainville CT

Rhythms of Grace

A second site for the popular play-based monthly worship service (see above for information on the Torrington service). Church of our Savior, Plainville. Contact Rev. Audrey Scanlan at ascanlan01@yahoo.com, or (860) 747-3109.☐

**Need a Gift or a Fun Educational Toy?
CT FEAT Recommends DISCOVERY TOYS®**

**Learning through Play for Children with Autism:
Choosing the Correct Toys**

The DISCOVERY TOYS® Company specializes in toys that focus on learning through play. The toys are fun, durable and developmentally designed for children of various abilities from birth through grade school. Their general appeal to all children supports individual learning programs and play activities with peers.



The company recently has begun affiliations with certain autism organizations which recommend specific toy products for children on the autism spectrum. These autism groups include the **Princeton Child Development Institute** (PCDI), **Autism Speaks**, and **CT FEAT**.



PCDI, well known for its science-based programs to help children with autism overcome their learning challenges, has used DISCOVERY TOYS® in their educational programs for years.

DISCOVERY TOYS® *Learning Pathways* products for children with autism include toys to develop:

1. Independent play with limited instruction
2. Sustained engagement
3. Cooperative play skills,
4. Opportunities to talk about play experience
5. Task completion (for independent play, and to develop sense of accomplishment)
6. Encouraging pretend play.

For a list of suggested products in each *Learning Pathway*, to browse or purchase from the online catalog, or for information on purchasing an **autism kit** of products endorsed by Dr. Patricia Krantz of PCDI for your children or students visit www.ctfeat.org. You can pay securely online and have the products shipped directly to you.

All profits from your purchases through CT FEAT will benefit CT FEAT and support our mission to help children with autism reach their full potential through our ongoing services. **CT FEAT** provides free information and training resources to families and professionals, and sponsors various special projects, such as our recent library book donation and educator scholarship programs – all through private donations and a committed volunteer staff.

Additionally, DISCOVERY TOYS® will make a donation to our friends at **Autism Speaks** for gift wrapped purchases.

Thanks for your interest in CT FEAT and for your support!

For more information about DISCOVERY TOYS® and Autism, please visit the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org (See "About Us.")☐

(Continued from page 8)

ABA, VB and RDI: What's a Parent to Do?

Rich or poor, all parents have a limit to the amount of time, energy, and money available to them to educate their child toward recovery. So how do you use this yin and yang of ABA/VB and RDI® to decide where to best allocate your limited resources? This depends on what you have already experienced and to what areas of deficit most significantly affect your child. If you are currently using traditional ABA methods that do not include the research of the Verbal Behavior approach to ABA, it is a good choice to upgrade your current program. If you already use the best methods of ABA/VB to help teach your child, you should consider looking into RDI® so that you have a more definitive set of relationship development goals.

In many cases the basic books of RDI® *Relationship Development Intervention with Young Children* (Gutstein and Sheely, 2002) and *Relationship Development Intervention with Children, Adolescents and Adults* (Gutstein and Sheely, 2002), along with *The RDI® Program Progress Tracking System*, and the most recent version of the RDI® video (available through the Connection Center web site) are sufficient tools to achieve this goal. Conversely, if you have already begun teaching yourself how to use RDI®, consider studying ABA/VB. Go to a few of the major workshops, purchase a few books and training tapes, and consider employing a BCBA.

If you are currently not familiar with either approach and your child is at all delayed in his behavior, communication, or general learning skills, you are best advised to focus your time and energy on the evidence-based teaching techniques of ABA/VB, due to the outstanding record of success and ever growing body of evidence supporting its use. However, if you have the resources and you feel your child's relationship skills are not being address effectively in your ABA program consider RDI® as a supplementary social relationship development approach. But with either approach, make sure that the people you are trusting to guide you have references, are certified, and up to date with the latest information and teaching procedures available.

*Editor's Note: Robert Schramm is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), with a Master's degree in Special Education. He has been a certified teacher in California and Illinois, and currently resides in Germany where he is the lead behavior analyst for Knospe-ABA (www.knospe-aba.com), Europe's largest ABA/VB autism intervention institute. He is the author of the very popular book, **Educate Toward Recovery: Turning the Tables on Autism**, a teaching manual for the Verbal Behavior approach to autism intervention designed for parents, teachers and therapists with limited formal training in VB. The book includes a chapter with additional information on ABA/VB and RDI®. Readers can learn more about Robert and his book at www.lulu.com/knospe-aba.*



Autism Spectrum Parent Support Groups

The Farmington Valley Asperger's Network (FAVAN) meets the last Tuesday of the month at 7 pm at the Farmington Senior Community Center Unionville. The group is open to family members of children or adults who have any form of ASD. For more information see www.favan.org or call Lee or Shawn McFadden at 860-589-0097.

Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA) sponsors monthly support meetings at Northwestern Connecticut Community College in Winsted. For more information call Sharon Cable at (860) 693-9128. ◻

(Continued from page 9)

DVD REVIEW *Going to the Heart of Autism: The Relationship Development Intervention Program*

Measurable Objectives-Home and School

Although not discussed on the video, relationship development objectives can and should be integrated into school programs, to facilitate quicker mastery and to generalize the skills. Goals and objectives can be included in the IEP and school staff can be trained in techniques to facilitate relationship skills. Certified consultants typically include recommended IEP objectives in the written assessment (RDA).

Ideally, multiple objectives targeting the same skill area could and should be included in the IEP, for example, (facial) referencing for information (such as locating a hidden object from facial cues), referencing for comfort, referencing for approval, referencing for task functioning, and referencing to resolve uncertainty.

Mastery of relationship objectives is measurable both in school and at home. For each objective, data would be kept on the number of successful opportunities compared to total opportunities presented and a percentage relationship would be developed. Mastery criteria could be set at 90% to ensure very strong but not "perfect" mastery of the skill, commensurate with typically developing people of the same age.

One objective my son's teachers are working on is called "referencing for task functioning." He and his teacher build a block structure together. She hands him each block and he has to build the structure only according to her nods or eye movements. This is a doubly challenging and rewarding activity because it requires both social referencing and cognitive flexibility.

DVD vs. Seminars

The DVD is a relatively inexpensive way to learn about the RDI® program and decide if it is right for your child. It can serve as a substitute when families or other interested people are unable to attend a seminar.

Information on seminars is available through the RDI® web site. Parents can choose a two-day introductory seminar or a four-day intensive seminar geared to couples. In my opinion, the two-day introductory seminar is a better value than the four-day intensive seminar. At \$250-\$300 per person, it is

(Continued from page 19)

DVD REVIEW *Going to the Heart of Autism:*

considerably less expensive per person per day than the \$2,000 per-couple 4-day intensive seminar. In my experience, the two additional days included in the 4-day seminar are not worth the considerable additional money. The hands on time can be accomplished with a local certified consultant during the RDA. The RDI® Progress Tracking Form, distributed at the 4-day seminar, can be purchased instead through the web site for \$25.

If parents do not have the opportunity to attend the seminars and/or use a certified consultant, it is still possible to obtain successful results from the program. However, many aspects of RDI® are not easy or intuitive, and are much better learned through coaching from experienced professionals.

Families interested in learning more about RDI® will find other resources available at the RDI® website, www.rdicconnect.com. *Going to the Heart of Autism: The Relationship Development Intervention Program DVD* is available there for \$150. The 5-hour introduction is an efficient way for families and therapists to obtain comprehensive information on the program, including its research basis, conceptual framework, and practical applications.

(Editor's Note: A more comprehensive article on RDI®, including the information presented here and additional information on RDI seminars, books, support networks, and Laura's experience with RDI within her own family can be found at the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org.)✽

(Continued from page 6)

BOOK REVIEW *The Autism Sourcebook*

experience. She understands what parents want and need to know. Her writing style is clear and accessible, and she has an exceptional ability to explain technical topics.

One of the recurring themes throughout the book is: "Respect and value your instincts about your child – never ignore them, no matter what anyone tells you." This is sometimes difficult to do in the face of "experts" whose recommendations may run contrary to what you believe is in your child's best interest.

It's not that parents have all the answers. But neither do professionals, even though they often don't recognize that fact. Learning about the topics covered in the **Autism Sourcebook** will make parents feel less intimidated by misguided "experts."

The **Autism Sourcebook** is divided into four parts, with sections on *Diagnosis, Treatment, Coping* and *Healing*. Each section begins with an introduction and is then divided into subparts. The subheadings often use a "frequently asked question" type of format, in a parent's voice – e.g. "Why does my son constantly seem aloof? Most of the time he acts as if I'm not even there."

The *Diagnosis* section has four chapters: 1) *The Many Faces of Autism* (discussing the various diagnostic classifications and the enormous variety among children even within a single category); 2) *Who Diagnoses My Child? Going Beyond Your Pediatrician* (with descriptions of the various professionals and tests); 3) *Understanding Your Child's Behaviors* (discusses some typical behaviors associated with autism, like lack of eye contact or playing alone); and 4) *Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Facts, Theories, Studies and Information You should Know* (succinct summaries of some of the leading studies and current research projects and their possible implications for treatment).

The *Treatment* section has four chapters: 1) *How to Make the Right Treatment and Intervention Decisions for Your Child*; 2) *Standard Treatments and Interventions for ASDs* (the many "non standard" treatments are exhaustively described in an appendix); 3) *You Have the Power - Advocating for Your Child's Legal Rights* (providing a basic overview of the law and including lots of practical tips for handling IEP meetings); and 4) *On Your Mark, Get Set...Start Treatment* (addresses many of the questions parents typically have about implementing treatment, and presents samples of different treatment schedules for children of varying ages and diagnoses).

The *Coping* section has six chapters: 1) *In the Beginning, Coming to Terms With the Diagnosis and Issues Surrounding the Diagnosis*; 2) *Beyond Soccer Games and Ballet Classes: Coping with Issues Surrounding Treatment, Services and Schools*; 3) *Inside and Outside the House: Coping with Everyday Life*; 4) *Brothers and Sisters: Coping with Sibling Issues*; 5) *Keeping it Personal: Coping with Your Marriage, Your Family and Your Self*; and 6) *Advice to Loved Ones: Coping Tips for Family and Friends*.

The final section, on *Healing*, is very short and consists of the author's retrospective reflection on how the healing process unfolded over the years, both for herself and for other families she has known. One key insight she shares is that "One of the most important parts of the healing process is accepting your child for who he or she is right now. If you dwell on the past or focus all your energy on the future, you'll miss out on the joy that's right in front of you."

The extensive appendices, which contain a wealth of valuable information, are well over one hundred pages and constitute almost a third of the entire book. They include a copy of the *Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT)*, a summary of the *Diagnostic Criteria for the Five Pervasive Developmental Disorders* (from the **DSM-IV-TR**), a comprehensive list (more than 20 pages) of *Treatments and Interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorders*, contact information for all of the national and international autism organizations, an extensive list of internet sites and books, and a glossary.

A new hardcover copy of the book costs \$27.95 but there are much cheaper used or remaindered copies available through some of Amazon's resellers.■

(Continued from page 12)

ASD PILOT PROJECT

2007 budget act. The project enabled DMR to hire an Autism Services Coordinator, Kathy Reddington, to lead the effort. Two groups were formed during early 2006 and merged in May to become an advisory steering committee with representatives of 12 state agencies, several professionals in the field, family members, and representatives from several autism support groups, including Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT). The committee is lead by Ms. Reddington and Lois Rosenwald of the ASRC. The group meets monthly as a whole, but also formed several sub committees to address various key tasks such as developing the vision, goals, eligibility criteria, a level of need assessment tool and provider training guidelines.

The pilot is currently in the process of selecting 25 individuals with ASD from the 15 cities and towns in the Greater New Haven area. The last count showed 15 individuals have submitted full applications for the program 9 of whom have been accepted as eligible to date; 6 men and 3 women. The pilot is also looking for adults in the Greater Hartford area to participate in a control group so that comparisons can be made to individuals receiving services and individuals who do not receive services. Should the legislature increase funding for the pilot in subsequent years, it is anticipated that volunteers for the control group would be the next to receive services. Service providers are also being solicited to participate in the project.

Services will include employment, living, and community supports. They will be based on the level of need of each individual and will thus vary widely. Employment supports might include the services of career counselors and job mentors to assist participants with resume writing and interviewing skills and resolving issues at work; living supports could include daily living skills training, such as budgeting and payment of bills as well as instructions and reminders regarding housekeeping and personal hygiene: i.e. custom supports which enable the individual to live successfully in the community to the fullest extent of their potential. Community supports are also envisaged and could include social skills training and help in gaining access to local community organizations.

Pilot implementation and will be documented and presented to policymakers and program providers to determine future steps for the program. Supporters hope the pilot project will result in a long term, full implementation of services in Connecticut. The Senate Bill calls for a final report to be issued by January 2009, which will provide policy makers and program providers with data on short-term costs and effects of the program that they need to determine future initiatives.

To learn more about DMR's Autism Spectrum Disorder Pilot Project and download an information brochure, go to www.dmr.state.ct.us/AutismPilot/ or call (860) 418-6078.◦

(Continued from page 12)

RESPITE OPTIONS

parents using the paraprofessional from the public school and from some of the autism schools in the state. Often the paraprofessional involves their own family in the respite so the child with autism ends up with peer models with whom to play.

Another option for locating a respite provider is your local college. Some of the education or special education majors may be looking for respite work. They may have taken some coursework that helps them to better understand children with autism, and they also have a desire to spend time with children.

It is very important for parents to feel comfortable leaving their child with the provider. Much of that comfort level is determined by knowing the provider well enough to trust him or her with your child. The Connecticut Lifespan Respite Coalition has put together a parent's guide to respite care that provides a list of questions to ask a prospective respite provider. Another way to help with your comfort level is to know you've left the provider all the necessary information he or she might need in your absence. The Connecticut Lifespan Respite Coalition has also designed another helpful booklet that parents can fill out before leaving their special needs child with a respite provider. To download these booklets and to get a list of respite resources in Connecticut, go to www.ctrespite.org or contact Joy Lieberskind, of the Connecticut Lifespan Respite Coalition, 60B Weston Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06120 (telephone 860-247-2572).

United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) has a program where they will pay for or provide a discounted stay at a hotel in the state. One visit to the hotel is allowed where the children go along, but the other visit(s) are meant to be for parents only. This program is available for parents of all special needs children - not just those whose child has cerebral palsy. To find out more about this program call your local UCP – see www.ucp.org.

It is very important to remember with any respite provider that you need to research the provider and be confident you can trust him or her to manage a successful respite time for both you and your child. Some of the organizations you may want to consider are: National Respite Locator Service online at www.respitelocator.org/searchStates.asp. Respite Resource online at www.respiteresource.com, and Infoline at www.infoline.org/InformationLibrary/ (search "Respite").

Parents of children with autism need and deserve to get a break from caring for their children. Finding that temporary supportive caregiver to give parents some relief can be difficult, but it is not impossible. Parents owe it to themselves, their spouses and their children to take advantage of the respite opportunities when possible.◦

FOUNDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS II
Conference and Luncheon Registration Form

The University of Connecticut, Waterbury (Driving directions on page 21)
Registration Fee (includes continental breakfast, luncheon buffet, and Continuing Education Credits*):
\$75 for professionals, \$60 for parents and students.

Please send completed registration form and your check by **May 12, 2007 (after May 12, add \$10 for late registration)** to:
CT FEAT, Inc. PO Box 370352, West Hartford, CT 06137

On-time registration is encouraged as space is limited. Walk-Ins will be accepted only as space allows.

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

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

More information is available on pages 3-5 of this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter, and at the
CT FEAT Information Hotline (860) 571-3888 and on the Web at www.ctfeat.org.

Name: _____ Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

School District or Organization: _____ CE /CEUs requested * _____

I am a: Special Educator _____ Para-professional _____ Regular Classroom Teacher _____ Behavior Analyst _____

Behavior Therapist _____ Parent _____ Administrator _____ SLP _____ OT _____ Student _____ Other _____

**0.4 CEUs for Educators, 2CEs for BCBAs*

Directions to 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 (left-hand) 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 a left at first traffic light onto North Elm Street. The entrance to the UCONN Parking Facility will be on your left.

Take the elevator to the Ground Floor and follow the signs to the conference area. See you there!

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 and in Waterbury, 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 ctfeat1@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 send an e-mail to newsletter@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 II:

***Effective Strategies for the Education
of Children with
Autism and Related Disabilities***

Saturday May 19, 2007

8:30 AM—3 PM

University of Connecticut, Waterbury

Featuring

Andy Bondy, Ph.D.

Pyramid Educational Consultants

Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D.

The University of Connecticut

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

The River Street Autism Program

Deborah Fein, Ph.D.

The University of Connecticut

Helping Children Reach Their Full Potential