



C.A.R.E.
Coping with Autism through Research and Education

Southwest Chapter Autism Society of America

April 2003

OFFICERS

Karl Zeff
 President
 Valerie Acosta
 Vice President
 Julie Bermann
 Treasurer

 Secretary
 Gilda Lopez
 Administrative
 Assistant

DIRECTORS

Arlen Bowden
 Michael Spurlock
 Roman. Bilynsky
 Debra Crump-
 Toulet
 Richard Razo
 Diane Tatem
 Cynthia Cano
 Lisa Mitchell

**MONTHLY
 MEETINGS**

**General
 Membership
 Meetings** are held
 the first Tuesday of
 every month at the
 El Paso Center for
 the Deaf, 511
 Executive Center
 Blvd. beginning at
 6:30 p.m.

Board Meetings
 are held on the
 Monday, one week
 prior to the
 Membership
 meeting at
 6:30 p.m.. All
 members are
 welcome to attend,
 and your input is
 always welcome.

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER

**4TH ANNUAL
 SWASA CONFERENCE
 PARTNERS TOGETHER: PARENTS AND
 EDUCATORS**

Tuesday, April 8, 2003

DIANE TWACHTMAN-CULLEN Ph.D. CCC SLP

Registration Forms are available at our office.

MONTHLY MEETING

We will not be having our Monthly Meeting in April because of the Conference on April 8th. We will be having our regular Monthly Meeting on Tuesday May 6th. Diane Tatem who is a licensed family counselor will be conducting a support group meeting. Refreshments and childcare will be available

Upcoming Events

Structured Teaching based on the TEACCH Model 6 Day Institute June 2003 at Region 19 ESC for information and registration call 780-5350.

INDEX

<i>SWASA Conference</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Sister's Story</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>A Message from the President</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Submit Your Family's Stories</i>	<i>4</i>

This article was written by the daughter of one of our Board Members, this is her Bar-Mitzvah project.

Dear Fellow Members of the Jewish Community,,

Hello. My name is Autumn Mitchell. I am 12 years old, and I am preparing for my Bar-Mitzvah. I have a little brother named Timothy, but we call him T.J. He is 8 years old. He loves to do a lot of outdoor activities like baseball, swimming, catching a frisbee, swinging on swings, and climbing trees. He really loves Buzz Lightyear and Woody from the movie "Toy Story". He has a lot of action figures and clothes with Buzz and Woody on them. We like to play outside together and a lot of other things just like any other brother and sister. We also like to pick on each other, too. He acts like a typical little brother, but in reality, he is autistic.

Autism is a brain disorder. It is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. My parents looked for help for several years before T.J. was actually diagnosed with autism at the age of 6. Autism is four times more likely to occur in boys than girls. It impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. The disorder makes it hard for them to communicate with others and relate to the outside world.

Autism is a combination of several developmental challenges:

Language develops slowly or not at all; they spend time alone rather than with others and are less responsive to social cues such as eye contact or smiles; they may have sensitivities in the areas of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste; they do not initiate pretend games; they may be overactive, throw tantrums for no apparent reason, show an obsessive interest in a single item, idea, or activity, have an apparent lack of common sense, may show aggression to others or self, and often has difficulty with changes in routine.

My brother T.J. exhibits many of these characteristics. However, to the contrary, many children and adults with autism may make eye contact, show affection, smile, laugh, and demonstrate a variety of other emotions. They can also feel anxiety, fear, and confusion because they are unable to "make sense" of the world in a routine way. With appropriate treatment, some behaviors associated with autism may change or diminish over time. The communication and social deficits continue in some form throughout life. T.J. is very happy and affectionate, but he does have a difficult time communicating.

There is a group known as the Autism Society of America that was founded in 1965. The mission of the ASA is to promote lifelong access and opportunities for persons within the autism spectrum and their families, to be fully included, participating members of their communities through advocacy, public awareness, education, and research related to autism. The ASA and its chapters share common goals of providing information and education, supporting research and advocating for programs and services for the autism community.

El Paso has its own chapter called the Southwest Autism Society of America (SWASA). They send out monthly newsletters, and hold general monthly meetings to provide information and support for local families with autism. They do not charge dues for families to join. They are currently working on a local Autism conference to bring in an expert to educate parents and professionals on how to work together to develop goals in education for school children with autism. They look to local businesses and charities for funding because all of their efforts can be costly. As part of my mitzvah project, I am hoping to collect donations to help SWASA continue their special work. Any amount, big or small, will be very much appreciated and will also be acknowledged. If you are able to help this worthwhile organization, I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope for your convenience. Thank you for your time and generosity!

Autumn Mitchell

“OUGHT-ISMS”

by Karl Zeff, M.D., President, SWASA

You Should Be at Our Conference!

The community of people helping individuals with Autism and Asperger’s Disorders is a special group. It takes dedication and passion to help our family members. With greater numbers comes hope. That is the whole reason for our 4th International Conference on April 8th. Every part of our community should be there.

Teachers and educators, you should be there. You have our children with you almost as many hours as they are at home. Parents give you a special responsibility to advance not only the academic skills, but the basic skills of living as well. This conference will help to simplify the IEP process and improve techniques for teaching kids with autism, using the best of all different theories in a practical easy to learn approach.

Paraprofessionals or teachers’ aides, you should be there. You are frequently the ones who do the real minute to minute work in the classroom. You may feel under trained and under appreciated. This conference will leave you feeling more confident to understand your role and learn ways to work better in the classroom.

Speech pathologists, you should be there. Our lecturer, Diane Twachtman-Cullen, has a doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology, and the insights gained in her talk will I’m sure have applications in your sessions. You also are getting continuing education credits!

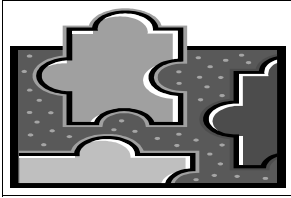
Occupational therapists, you should be there. Not only will Dr. Twachtman-Cullen give advice on improving childhood functioning, but your presence needs to be more visible. We families hardly get to see you except at the ARDs (IEP meetings).

Physicians, psychologists, social workers, and counselors you should definitely be there! Developmental pediatricians, neurologists, psychiatrists and child psychiatrists—we trust our families to you for diagnostic and medication expertise. Your practice might be helped immeasurably by a better understand of the IEP process as well as tips to pass onto your patients about more effective parenting skills gained from this conference. Also, 6 hours of CME!

Families and individuals with autism, please be there. You’re going to feel more confident dealing with the educational system, and learn to work better with your autistic family members. But with the wonderful lunch being planned, and other chances to socialize and compare, a great comfort can be gained from meeting each other.

All this is happening during National Autism Awareness Month.

Fantastic speakers (including the introductory speaker, County Judge Linda Chew, and Master of Ceremonies, the voice of the UTEP Miners, John Teicher), a book fair, and a great lunch are going to be there. You should be there too. As my son Mickey says: “See ya later!” At our conference, I hope.



SWASA
 Southwest Autism
 Society of America
 511 Executive Center
 Blvd.
 El Paso, TX 79902

NON-PROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 EL PASO, TX.
 PERMIT NO. 1020

**Mailing
 Address**

In This Issue...

4th Annual International Autism Conference

***Submit Stories about your
 Children to the News Letter***

We want to know more about your children and your entire family. Please share your family's activities, events, and endeavors with all of us through the SWASA News Letter. We would like each family to contribute a story about your children's accomplishments, hobbies, likes and dislikes.

You may mail your stories to SWASA office at 511 Executive Center Blvd., El Paso, Texas, 79902, e-mail us at autism@swasa.com, fax us at 532-6015 or contact our office at 532-6014. Also please submit a photo of your child or family along with your story.

