



ASGC Newsletter

From The President's Desk

Happy New Year to one and all! 2006 is here and your Autism Society of Greater Cleveland looks forward to a very exciting and eventful year. Outstanding speakers, high-profile fund raisers and an expanded board are all part of the agenda.

2005 was a very important year for the chapter. We saw changes in our leadership, tax status and meeting location. We welcomed many new members, parents and professionals. We experienced substantial growth, and look to more of the same in the upcoming year.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of our outstanding presenters of the last year, including representatives from The Achievement Center, Met Desk, the law firm of

Meeting Time and Location for ASGC

The ASGC meets the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm in room 8 of the St. Basil Parish Center in Brecksville. The next meeting is January 4.

Anyone who is affected by, has a loved one affected by, or just wishes to learn more about autism or autism spectrum disorders is welcome to attend.

Hickman and Louder, The Monarch School and DAN protocol pioneer Dr. Derrick Lonsdale.

This year we will welcome many more valuable presenters, including representatives from the Cleveland Clinic and Integrations Treatment Center.

For our January meeting, we welcome Carol Richards, Executive Director of North Coast Education Services. Her presentation is Autism Scholarship 101: creating an effective IEP. Free workbooks will be available to the first forty members in attendance.

The January meeting will be on Wednesday, January 4, 2006 in the Parish Center behind St. Basil's Church in Brecksville. We will open thee doors at 6:15 and the meeting will begin at 6:30. Anyone who is personally affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder, or would just like to learn more about ASD is welcome to attend.

In 2006 our efforts will be earnestly directed to make the greater Cleveland area the best place to live for those with ASD. We appreciate the support of our growing membership and fellow ASA chapters, and we look forward to seeing you at a chapter meeting soon.

Rory McLean, President
Gus Gallucci, Vice-President

Autism Society of Greater Cleveland

January 2006

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Autism Society of Greater Cleveland Officers

Rory McLean
President

Gus Gallucci
Vice President

Maureen Ferfolia
Secretary

We can be reached at:
(216)556-4937

Letter provides crash course in Autism for party hosts

Dear Family and Friends,

I understand that we will be visiting each other for the holidays this year. Sometimes these visits can be very hard for me, but here is some information that might help our visit to be more successful. As you probably know, I am challenged by a hidden disability called Autism, or what some people refer to as a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD). Autism/PDD is a neurodevelopmental disorder which makes it hard for me to understand the environment around me. I have barriers in my brain that you can't see. They make it difficult for me to adapt to my surroundings. Sometimes, I may seem rude and abrupt, but it is only because I have to try so hard to understand people and at the same time, make myself understood. People with autism have different abilities: Some may not speak, some write beautiful poetry. Others are whizzes in math (Albert Einstein was thought to be autistic), or may have difficulty making friends. We are all different and need various degrees of support. Sometimes when I am touched unexpectedly, it might feel painful and make me want to run away. I get easily frustrated too. Being with lots of other people is like standing next to a moving freight train and trying to decide how and when to jump aboard.

I feel frightened and confused a lot of the time. This is why I need to have things the same as much as possible. Once I learn how things happen, I can get by okay. But, if something, anything changes, then I have to relearn the situation all over again! It is very hard. When you try to talk to me, I often can't understand what you say because there is a lot of distraction around. I have to concentrate very hard to hear and understand one thing at a time. You might think I am ignoring you--I am not. Rather, I am hearing everything and not knowing what is most important to respond to. Holidays are exceptionally hard because there are so many different people, places, and things going on that are out of my ordinary realm. This may be fun and adventurous for most people, but for me it's very hard work and can be extremely stressful.

I often have to get away from all the commotion to calm down. It would be great if you had a private place set up to where I could retreat. If I cannot sit at the meal table, do not think I am misbehaved or that my parents have no control over me. Sitting in one place for even five minutes is often impossible for me. I feel so antsy and overwhelmed by all the smells, sounds, and people--I just have to get up and move about. Please don't hold up your meal for me--go on without me, and my parents will handle the situation the best way they know how. Eating in general is hard for me. If you understand that autism is a sensory processing disorder, it's no wonder eating is a problem! Think of all the senses involved with eating. Sight, smell, taste, touch, and all the complicated mechanics that are involved.

Chewing and swallowing is something that a lot of people with autism have trouble with. I am not being picky--I literally cannot eat certain foods as my sensory system and/or oral motor coordination are impaired. Don't be disappointed if Mom hasn't dressed me in starch and bows. It's because she knows how much stiff and frilly clothes can drive me buggy! I have to feel comfortable in my clothes, or I will just be miserable. When I go to someone else's house, I may appear bossy and controlling. In a sense, I am being controlling, because that is how I try to fit into the world around me (which is so hard to figure out)! Things have to be done in a way I am familiar with, or else I might get confused and frustrated. It doesn't mean you have to change the way you are doing things--just please be patient with me, and understanding of how I have to cope. Mom and Dad have no control over how my autism makes me feel inside.

People with autism often have little things that they do to help themselves feel more comfortable. The grown ups call it "self regulation," or "stimming."

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Legislative Briefs

The House adopted a resolution commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The resolution reaffirms the Congress' support for IDEA.

On November 16, the House passed a bill (H.R. 1790) that would require states to develop and implement policies concerning prescription drugs and schoolchildren. The bill prohibits school authorities from requiring students to obtain and use drugs (controlled substance or psychotropic drug) as a condition to stay in school. The bill also allows educators to discuss behavior issues with parents.

U. S. Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings announced a new policy for the use of "growth models" as one way school systems can meet the NCLB standards. Growth models measure an individual student's progress from year-to-year and holds schools accountable for that progress. These models would allow schools a safe harbor by giving schools credit for progress even though students have not yet met the proficiency levels required by NCLB. No more than ten states will be allowed to pilot the growth model in the next school year.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) -
Court Case

On November 14, the Supreme Court, in Schaffer vs. Weast, decided that the burden of proof during an administrative hearing challenging an individualized education program's (IEP) appropriateness under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is on the party seeking relief. In practice, parents who have children with disabilities are usually seeking the relief and this decision will likely discourage parents from suing a school system to secure an appropriate education for their child. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote the decision, joined by five other Justices. Justice Ginsburg's dissent tracked many of the Schaffers' arguments, and those in The Arc, Autism Society of America, United Cerebral Palsy and other disability organizations' Amicus brief.

Letter gives party hosts crash course in Autism/PDD

From Page 2

I might rock, hum, flick my fingers, or any number of different things. I am not trying to be disruptive or weird. Again, I am doing what I have to do for my brain to adapt to your world. Sometimes, I cannot stop myself from talking, singing, or doing an activity I enjoy. The grown ups call this "perseverating" which is kind of like self regulation or stimming. I do this only because I have found something to occupy myself that makes me feel comfortable. Perseverative behaviors are good to a certain degree because they help me calm down. Please be respectful to my Mom and Dad if they let me "stim" for a while as they know me best and what helps to calm me. Remember that my Mom and Dad have to watch me much more closely than the average child. This is for my own safety and the preservation of your possessions. It hurts my parents' feelings to be criticized for being overprotective or condemned for not watching me close enough. They are human and have been given an assignment intended for saints.

My parents are good people and need your support. Holidays are filled with sights, sounds, and smells. The average household is turned into a busy, frantic, festive place. Remember that this may be fun for you, but it's very hard work for me to conform. If I fall apart or act out in a way that you consider socially inappropriate, please remember that I don't possess the neurological system that is required to follow some social rules. I am a unique person--an interesting person. I will find my place at this Celebration that is comfortable for us all, as long as you'll try to view the world through my eyes!

This article appeared in the holiday 1999 issue of ASAP News! (Volume 3.5), The Autism Support and Advocacy Project, and Potential Unlimited Publishing. ("Dear Family and Friends:" was written for the purpose of it being sent to relatives and hosts of holiday gatherings who might need a crash course in what to expect from their guest with autism)."

Autistic man dies after being tasered, pepper sprayed by Police

CHICAGO -- A 30-year-old man died shortly after he severely bit a caregiver and had to be restrained by Des Plaines Police using a taser gun and pepper spray, police said.

Dead is Hansel Cunningham of 843 S. Golf Cul De Sac, in Des Plaines, according to the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office.

Police responded to a call for help at the Des Plaines address at 3:40 p.m. Sunday, according to a Des Plaines police release.

The release said that Ahmed Sayed, a caregiver at the residential treatment facility where Cunningham lived, was severely bitten on his hands and arms.

He was bitten when he tried to subdue Cunningham, a patient at the facility.

Cunningham, was autistic and mentally retarded, and lived in a care facility named Rimland Services for Autistic Citizens, Tony Jones, a staff member who works at the home, said Monday morning in a telephone interview.

A police news release said that Cunningham became enraged and combative, and resisted attempts by officers to handcuff him.

Cunningham fled to the backyard and took off his clothes, the release said. The police officers then tried to subdue Cunningham with a taser and pepper spray, but he defeated these efforts and continued to resist, the release stated.

"We did everything we could to subdue him," Des Plaines Police Chief Jim Prandini said, adding that the use of the taser and pepper spray "didn't faze him."

Officers had to tackle Cunningham to subdue him, Prandini said.

"This is a very unfortunate incident and this was not the intended outcome," Prandini said.

"We did everything we knew in our tool box, so to speak, that we were exercising proper care with this gentleman."

After police tackled Cunningham and handcuffed him, the man started to experience difficulty breathing, the release said.

"It was at that point he lost consciousness," Prandini said.

A Des Plaines Fire Department crew, which was on the scene treating Sayed's bite, immediately began life saving measures on Cunningham, but could not revive him, the release said.

Cunningham was taken to Northwest Community Healthcare in Arlington Heights where he was pronounced dead at 4:40 p.m. Sunday, the medical examiner's office spokesman said.

Calls to the Des Plaines Police were referred to a police chief who was not immediately available.

The State Police Public Integrity Unit was conducting an independent investigation into the death, the release said.

Jones said he was told Cunningham bit Sayed because he tried to block Cunningham from entering the kitchen of the home. He said the residents are allowed to go into the kitchen.

He said Cunningham was about 5 feet 7 inches and weighed about 140 pounds. Jones said that after being attacked, Sayed told another patient of the home to call police.

Cunningham was mute and used sign language to communicate, Jones said. He believed that Cunningham was confused and did not mean any harm to anyone.

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Filmmaker, 17, paints picture of life as a child with autism

By Tenley Woodman

It's not that unusual for a teen, especially one from California, to be a budding filmmaker. But Taylor Cross, 17, turned his camera on a subject few directors have touched: the mind of the autistic child.

Cross' 10-minute film "Normal People Scare Me," which was shown at the Flutie Bowl in Boston, shows nonautistics what it is like to live with autism.

"Pretty much I've been living in a cave for several years, except for the autistic kids," said Cross during his visit to Boston last week.

Autism is a developmental disorder that alters a person's social interaction and communication skills and is typically diagnosed in early childhood.

According to the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism affects one in 166 births.

Cross was diagnosed at age 6. Doctors told his mother that he might never walk or talk.

Eleven years later, the high school junior is trying to turn his short documentary into a feature film with the help of Joey Travolta, owner of Entertainment Experience and the older brother of actor John.

"Make no mistake about it, we have pulled each other's hair out (at times). It has not been easy," said Keri Bowers, Cross' mother. "Taylor looks damn good in life because he works at it."

Cross interviewed dozens of kids with autism and their parents. Among them was world-class surfer Izzy Paskowitz, who discussed his frustration with his son's disorder.

"It would be difficult for other kids. It would be, and it is. You can imagine another teen in this situation and he's not autistic. How would he feel?" Cross said.

Though Cross attends regular classes, he has few friends

autistic kids, who vary in functioning levels from verbal to nonverbal.

"I think I understand what's been going on in the head," he said. "It's a comfort level."

Cross has never been invited to a birthday party, play date or engagement by a peer without autism. Those he interviewed have had similar experiences.

"They don't judge each other," Bowers said.

Cross, an avid fan of film and video games, hopes to pursue film as a career. In "Normal People Scare Me", he interviewed the dean of New York University's film program.

Though his path to success has not been easy, Cross said he believes others can make it further than he has.

"When it comes to that, work on it on your own terms. Try to reach out, because it will make you more insecure if you don't," he said.

A film about siblings of autistic kids is in preproduction and will be directed by Cross' younger brother Jace, 10.

To learn more about Taylor Cross' projects, go to: www.artistsforautism.com

AutismCares seeks to help families displaced by Hurricane Katrina

AutismCares is a nonprofit agency committed to helping families affected by the gulf region hurricanes who have children with autism.

AutismCares has over 150 families in our database that need help after the Gulf Hurricanes. We are working to provide them with housing, clothing, food, medicines, beds, and other necessities. These families are facing an uncertain future and a holiday season that will be bare minimum, at best. We need your help. On our site is a list of children affected by the hurricanes and some of their needs and wishes. Please go to our site <http://66.148.5.47/autismcares/adoptachild.htm> and share your generosity with a child in need.

USAAA Appoints Dr. DeMio

December 1, 2005 — The USAutism & Asperger Association (USAAA) appointed Dr. Phillip DeMio to the Scientific Advisory Board.

The USAAA Advisory Board is divided into two areas: a Scientific Advisory Board and an Autism Community Advisory Board.

Dr. DeMio is a Defeat Autism Now! Practitioner and the father of a child with autism. He has been an MD for over 20 years, including as a faculty member at several teaching hospitals with a career that includes ER medicine, with an emphasis on toxicology. Dr. DeMio is accredited for speaking nationally on medical topics including brain toxicology, nutrition, and the use of supplements in health and disease for children and adults. Currently a program host on Autism One Radio, he has previously hosted different health talk radio programs.

Area Special Needs Doctors

Here is a brief list of doctors and other practices that may help you find needed care.

If you know of a good physician or other service, please send your comments to Marian at:
DMHelmick1@wmconnect.com

Pediatric Dentist for special needs children:

Arlene J. Coloma DDS. MS.
Phone: 440-526-2350
Brecksville, Ohio 44141

DAN Doctors:

DeMio, Philip M.D.
320 Orchardview Ave. Suite Two
Seven Hills, Ohio 44131
216-901-0441

Lonsdale, Derrick M.D.
Preventive Medicine Group
24700 Center Ridge Rd., Suite 317
Westlake, OH 44145
Tel: 440-835-0104
Fax: 440-871-1404

Man dies after being tasered

From Page 4

Jones said he has worked with Cunningham for more than six years and had never known Cunningham to be violent. He said Sayed is in his 50s or 60s.

Cunningham said he had worked with Cunningham from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday. He said Cunningham ate two meals during the day and was in good spirits and watching television when he left for the day.

Jones left the facility after 3 p.m., but returned when he received a call from a staff member telling him what happened, he said. He arrived shortly after Cunningham was taken to the hospital and found the home surrounded by police tape. Jones said that Cunningham was not on any new medication that would have spurred irregular behavior. He said that several other residents of the home saw what happened.

Jones said that Cunningham's parents spoke with him Sunday around noon to tell him they were going to pick him up on Wednesday so he could spend Thanksgiving with them in their Chicago home. Cunningham was excited and spent most holidays with his parents, Jones said.

"I'm looking at Hansel's bed now. It's sad," he said.

Cunningham is listed as a registered voter in Illinois. A representative of the Cook County Public Guardian's Office was not immediately available for comment Monday morning.

2006 Meeting for Autism Research accepting conference submissions

The 2006 International Meeting for Autism Research is now accepting abstract submissions for the conference. The deadline to submit is January 15, 2006. Please note that there will be fewer oral presentations and more poster presentations at the 2006 meeting. The Scientific Committee will determine presentation method after the submissions have been reviewed. Authors will be informed about the acceptance of their presentation by February 10, 2006. The conference will be held in Montreal (Province of Quebec, Canada) June 1 through June 3, 2006, and will last three full days. For more information, go to:

<http://www.cevs.ucdavis.edu>

ASA to participate in study group

The Autism Society of America (ASA)--including President & CEO Lee Grossman, Chair of the Board Cathy Pratt, Ph.D., Board Member Stephen Shore, Honorary Board Member Ruth Sullivan, Ph.D., and Former PPA Chair David Holmes, Ed.D.--has been selected to participate in the 32nd Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) study group entitled "Rehabilitation of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders."

The IRI is sponsored by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and represents a collaborative effort amongst RSA; state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies; consumer groups; regional rehabilitation continuing education programs; and other stakeholders in the VR program, in developing a linkage between knowledge development and practitioner utilization.

As a result of the study, the RSA hopes to put together best practices, skills, techniques, and systems to encourage professional VR counselors to engage consumers in meaningful partnerships that result in the achievement of meaningful employment for individuals

Committee to help emergency workers care for those with autism

RALEIGH, N.C. - Legislative leaders have created a committee to help emergency responders develop practices for dealing with autistic people.

The committee will study education, training and response policies, according to a statement from House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, and Senate Leader Marc Basnight, D-Dare.

The Joint Study Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorder, Law Enforcement, Public Safety and First Responders is a response to the work in recent years of a task force that looked at the need for policy changes related to the treatment of people with autism.

Rep. Edd Nye, D-Bladen, and Sen. William Purcell, D-Scotland, will lead the study committee.

Autism covers a variety of related brain disorders and typically involves delays or impairment in social skills, language and behavior. It occurs in one in every 166 births.

Student conducts autism study

Hello, my name is Caitlin Galloway, and I am a student at The College of Wooster. I am conducting a research study to better understand the nature of autism and its therapy techniques. Please note that by completing the questionnaire, you are allowing your answers to be analyzed. All answers will be kept confidential and anonymous. You have the right to discontinue participation in this study without any consequences. If you have any questions, please contact me at cgalloway@wooster.edu, or my advisor, Dr. Pamela Mitchell at pmitchell@wooster.edu, (330) 263-2031.

In order for you to return the survey to me anonymously, I have created an e-mail account for you to use. Simply go to <http://www.hotmail.com> and use the following account: Username/e-mail address: issurvey05@hotmail.com Password: autism05
Send the filled out survey to cgalloway@wooster.edu.

ASA's National Conference to be held in July 2006

The Autism Society of America's 37th National Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders, "Lighting the Way to Hope, Navigating to Success & Solutions," will be held in Providence, Rhode Island, July 12-15, 2006. The Workshops will be day-long sessions on July 12, with the Opening General Session on Thursday morning, July 13. The exhibits also open on July 13.

Greater Akron Chapter of the Autism Society of America

serving Summit, Stark, Portage, Wayne and Medina Counties

January 24, 2006 at 7pm

Get the "Poop" on Training Your "Whiz" Kid with
Autism Spectrum Disorder
Beth Anne Martin - Cleveland Clinic

February 21, 2006 at 7pm

Met Desk / Met Life
Estate and Trust Planning for your child with Special Needs

Meetings at Akron Children's Hospital Considine Building
www.asagreaterakron.com or 330-543-3955

Autism Society of Greater Cleveland

P. O. Box 41409
Brecksville, Ohio 44141

Phone: 216-556-4937
Email: support@asgc.org

From Diagnosis through Adulthood.

The ASGC is a volunteer organization



Upcoming Autism Conferences in Ohio

**Asperger's Syndrome:
Everything You Always
Wanted to Know**

February 10, 2006

featured speakers

Dr. Peter Gerhardt

Leslie Sinclair

(M. A. CCC-SLP, BCBA)

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Tri-C Metro Campus

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

\$25.00 (Lunch is included with advance
registration.)

For registration call:

Cleveland Clinic Center for Autism at

216-721-1292

**"Behavioral and Inclusion
Strategies for Home,
School and Community"**

Featuring:

**Maria Bird-West Wheeler
and Dr. Paula Kluth**

February 1-2, 2006

Cleveland, OH

Holiday Inn West

www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com

**"Behavioral and Inclusion
Strategies for Home,
School and Community"**

Featuring:

**Maria Bird-West Wheeler
and Dr. Paula Kluth**

February 23-24, 2006

Columbus, OH

Concourse Hotel

www.spectrumtrainingsystemsinc.com
